

English music in the Library of King João IV of Portugal¹

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ABSTRACT

King João IV became King of Portugal in 1640 through the political will of others. His own true passion in life was music. He built up what in his day may well have been the richest music library in Europe. His ambassadors, besides their political duties, were constantly called upon to obtain new musical editions for the library. English music – Catholic sacred music, madrigals, instrumental music – formed a significant part of this collection. This article seeks to describe the extent and comprehensiveness of the English works and to lament the loss of so unparalleled a library in the Lisbon earthquake of 1755.

In 1578 the 24-year-old King Sebastião of Portugal led his ill-conceived crusade against the Moors in North Africa. The battle that ensued at Alcazar-Qivir proved to be catastrophic for the Portuguese nation. Not only was the monarch never seen again, but the cream of the Portuguese nobility was killed or taken prisoner. Among the prisoners was Teodósio, the 10-year old Duke of Barcelos, eldest son of the Duke of Braganza and third in line to the throne.

The heir to the throne, Sebastião's great-uncle, Cardinal Prince Henrique, was in his mid-seventies when he succeeded and within 18 months was dead. The second in line, Ranuccio Farnese, son of the Duke of Parma, belonged to a family with close links to Spain, which chose not to press the claim but to support the Spanish King Felipe II in his own claim to the Portuguese crown, through his mother Queen Isabel, daughter of King Manuel I of Portugal. The Spanish authorities conveniently ransomed the Duke of Barcelos, keeping him out of harm's way while Felipe annexed Portugal.

For the remainder of his life Teodósio, in due course Duke Teodósio II of Braganza, while fully aware of his position as the leading Portuguese noble and maintaining a household befitting

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such a position, kept a low political profile. Thus when his own son, João, was born at the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa on 19th March 1604, Teodósio determined to give him a good but discreet education. And music was to be central to the ‘politically harmless’ upbringing of the Duke of Barcelos, the title given to each first-born son of the Dukes of Braganza.

Duke Teodósio maintained a fine chapel at Vila Viçosa, with an excellent choir, well supplied with liturgical chant books and volumes of polyphonic masses, motets and other sacred music by the leading composers of the period. As music teacher for his son he took on a young Englishman, very likely an exiled Catholic recusant, known in Portugal as Roberto Tornar. After a period in training in Madrid, sponsored by Duke Teodósio, Tornar returned to Vila Viçosa by 1608 and was chapelmaster there from 1616 to 1624.²

It seems that Tornar had great difficulty in motivating the future Duke of Braganza and King; indeed, all the evidence is that the latter had little respect for him. It is noticeable, for example, that in the years to come, neither as Duke of Braganza, nor as King did João ever sponsor the publication of any of his compositions, which he did for a number of other composers.³

We do not know exactly when João’s lack of motivation was overcome, but in 1624 a young musician named João Lourenço Rebelo, at that time aged 15, became part of the ducal household and study companion to the Duke of Barcelos. They were to become and remain close friends.

In 1630 Duke Teodósio of Braganza died. In his will he went to some pains to stress to his son the importance of maintaining his chapel and the music therein as an absolute priority:

I remind my son that the best thing that I leave him in this house is my chapel, and thus I ask that he should never neglect the embellishment of it, being present whenever possible at the divine offices celebrated therein, seeking that they be maintained with the perfection and continuation that they have enjoyed hitherto, and likewise the chaplains, musicians, officers and all others that give service, with which I charge him as earnestly as I can.⁴

² For further information on this subject see Ryan (2001: 191-202).

³ João Lourenço Rebelo and Frei Manuel Cardoso, to name the two most celebrated cases.

⁴ “Lembro a meu filho, o Duque, que a melhor cousa que lhe deixo nesta Casa é a minha Capela e assim lhe peço se não descuide nunca do ornato dela, assistindo-lhe

And thus it was, both at the Ducal Palace at Vila Viçosa, and later at the Royal Chapel in Lisbon, after the Spaniards had been expelled in 1640 and the Portuguese nobility had placed the Duke of Braganza on the throne as King João IV. Both institutions were maintained at the highest level, with particular importance being placed on the music performed there. The reluctant apprentice had become the most avid of music lovers. To gain an idea of just how great was his passion for music, it is sufficient to read the description of the King's daily routine, as described by Francisco da Cruz, in the *Biblioteca Lusitana*:

Every day he would rise at five; and until seven he would study music, even taking with him to Alcântara a chest with his papers so as not to miss studying: he did not take an afternoon nap and would employ this time in trying out music which came from all over, ordered for his library. He would distinguish the works with these letters: B, MB, MMB, R, that is to say *boa* (good), *muito boa* (very good), *muito muito boa* (very very good), *reprovada* (reject). These last went to a trunk to which he had given the name 'hell'. He always finished these sessions with a *Miserere*. He didn't try out profane works, nor did he want his singers to sing them, saying that they made the voice effeminate.⁵

Here we see the crucial importance of his music library. He had, of course, inherited a notable collection of sacred music books for use in the Ducal Chapel. But from the moment he became Duke of Braganza, João spared nothing in energy or money in the acquisition of printed music and music manuscripts, as well as books on the theory and practice of music. He wanted everything that he did not already possess in his library. His ambassadors in Madrid (prior to

enquanto puder aos officios divinos que se celebram nela, procurando que sejam com a perfeição e continuação que até aqui, assim de Capalães, músicos, oficiais, como de todo o mais serviço, o que lhe encarrego quanto posso" (cited in Freitas Branco 1956: 11).

⁵ "Todos os dias se leuanta a cinco horas; e ate às sete tinha estudo de Musica, e ate hindo a Alcantara leuava hum Bau com os seus papeis p^a não perder o estudo: não dormia sesta, e empregava aquelle tempo a prouar Musica q[ue] lhe uinha de diuersas p^{tes} p^a a mandar por na sua liuraria distinguindo as obras com estas letras B. M.B. M.M.B. R. Hoc est boa; m^{to} boa; m^{to} m^{to} boa; Reprouada e estas hião p^a o Caixão a q[ue] tinha posto o nome Inferno. Sempre acabava as prouas com um Miserere. Não fes obra humana, nem queria que seus Musicos a Cantacem, dizendo afiminaua as uozes" (cited in Nery 1984: 140-141).

the Portuguese Restoration), Paris, London, Rome, and so on, would receive regular instructions regarding musical affairs, alongside affairs of state – considerable correspondence survives to this effect. The pains he went to in order to buy manuscripts from Spain,⁶ as well as autograph scores of the Papal composer Palestrina, were extraordinary.

Throughout his reign as Duke and then King, João IV of Portugal amassed a collection which, had it not been lost in its entirety in the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, would be the envy of the musical world. In 1649 he published the first of two parts of an index of the works contained in his library, two copies of which *have* survived, and which gives us a detailed picture of the enormous quantity and variety that it contained.⁷ We do, in fact, find the indications B, MB, MMB and R beside the entries for a good many of the manuscripts, the direct result of the many afternoons spent listening to and evaluating the music in his collection.

A small but significant part of the index is made up of listings of English music, in all but four instances, printed music. In chronological terms the earliest is the volume *Cantiones Sacrae* (Index N^o. 275), Latin motets and liturgical polyphony by Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, published by the two of them in 1575, the first of their publications under the terms of the ten-year monopoly on music printing granted them that year by Queen Elizabeth I. The last was Martin Peerson's *Motets or grave chamber music*, published in London in 1630 (Index N^o. 897 and 905 – the King possessed two copies). In total the index lists as many as 76 different volumes that were published in London, of which there were two copies of six items, plus a further 15 volumes by English composers published in Antwerp.

In terms of repertoire, this music consisted principally of madrigals and lute-songs or ayres. If we take the case of madrigals,

⁶ Particularly manuscripts by the Franco-Flemish composer Matthieu Rosmarin, who came as a choirboy to Spain in 1586, living there until his death in 1647, under the translated form of his name, Mateo Romero (though more often known locally by the nickname 'El Capitán'). At the time of Rosmarin's death, King João was trying to obtain his complete works. For further information on João's acquisition policy, see Nery 1990: Vol. I, 203-223.

⁷ The copies are preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon. The latter copy originally belonged to the Cistercian Monastery at Alcobaça. Sampaio Ribeiro 1967 publishes the work in facsimile.

including canzonets and balletts, by way of example, King João's library contained all of the major collections: *Musica transalpina*, the first ever madrigal publication in England, consisting of madrigals by Italian composers in English translation, published by Nicholas Yonge in 1588, followed by a second volume with the same title in 1597 (respectively, Index Nos. 552 and 584), Thomas Watson's comparable 1591 collection *First Set of Italian Madrigals Englished* (Index N^o. 552), *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a compendium of madrigals in praise of the Queen, published by Thomas Morley in 1601 (Index N^o. 913), as well as almost all the major madrigal collections of Thomas Morley himself, John Wilbye, Thomas Weelkes, John Farmer, John Bennet, Thomas Bateson, Michael East and others.

The picture is rather similar in the case of lute-songs or ayres, the only really notable absence being Thomas Campion's *Third and fourth books of Ayres*, published together in 1617.

Publications of instrumental music in London were fewer and further between. This serves in part to explain why all four manuscripts listed as being in King João's library were of instrumental music, two by John Coprario, one of them autograph, one probably by Alfonso Ferrabosco, the younger, and one by Orlando Gibbons.⁸ Nevertheless, the library did include virtually all the instrumental publications to come out in London at this period, including, for example, Holborne's *Pavanes, galliards and allemands*, of 1599 (Index No. 880), John Dowland's *Lachrimae* of 1604 (Index No. 920) and the two books published by the viola da gamba player Tobias Hume: *First Part of Ayres or Musical Humours*, of 1695, and *Poetical Music*, of 1607 (both volumes form part of Index No. 941).

The picture with regard to sacred music is also quite striking. The library included all of William Byrd's published sacred music, without exception. Although Byrd did happen to be a Roman Catholic, the only major Catholic musician not to convert to Anglicanism or flee the country, King João clearly gave no instructions to his ambassador in London to avoid Anglican church music. Among the Anglican church music collections in his library we find, for example, William Daman's *Psalms of David in English metre*, of 1579, and his *Second book of the music*, of 1591 (both volumes

⁸ Index No. 466: "*Fantásias para tanger*. Giouanni Coprario, & outros escritos da mão do mesmo Autor." (autograph); No. 574: "*Madrigais, ou Cançoens*. Giouanni Coprario, a 5. para as violas. *Escritos de mão*."; No. 576: "*Fantásias*. Alfonso, & outros, a 4. para tanger com as violas. *Escritos de mão*."; No. 577: "[*Fantásias*.] Or Gibbons, & outros, a 3. & mais vozes. *Escritos de mão*."

Index No. 895), John Amner's *Sacred hymns*, of 1615 (Index No. 281), as well as the above-mentioned *Motets or grave chamber music*, published by Martin Peerson in 1630. These represent a very much smaller proportion of the published books of this genre, when compared with madrigals and lute-songs, but then many of these volumes would have been of little use to anyone but a practising Anglican, which King João, of course, was not. That the King had nothing specially against Protestant music as such can be shown not only by his possessing these few Anglican books, but also a volume of Claude Goudimel's settings of the Huguenot Genevan Psalter, probably the first volume, published in 1557 (Index No. 931).

On the other hand, the exiled recusant English Catholics Richard Dering and Peter Philips are well represented in the collection, with three publications by Dering and as many as eleven by Philips, including Italian madrigals as well as church music, particularly worthy of note being a two-part posthumous publication, the first part containing Masses and Psalms, the second motets, no copy of which has survived. All were published in Antwerp. Also from Antwerp is a volume entitled *Melodieuses, Paduanes, Chansons, Gallardes, Almandes & Courantes*, of 1619, consisting of instrumental music by Richard Brade, an instrumental virtuoso working at this time in Hamburg (Index No. 291).

Reference should also be made to an English book on musical pedagogy included in the *Index*, namely Thomas Robinson's *The Schoole of Musicke* (London, 1603), a milestone in the teaching of lute technique (Index No. 938). A manuscript by King João's music librarian João Álvares Frouvo, entitled *Scriptores de Musica*, evidently postdating the publication of the *Index*, indicates that the library also possessed Thomas Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (London, 1597) and *A Brief Introduction to the Skill of Song*, by the Irish-born (and therefore, at that time, an English subject) William Bathe (1564-1614).⁹ Bathe was briefly the Principal of the Irish College in Lisbon (the so-called 'Colégio dos Inglesinhos'), from 1604 to 1606, when he settled in Salamanca.¹⁰

This brief description of the contents of the English music in King João's music library gives us a sense of the significance of the printed books and manuscripts he had gathered. There is no library

⁹ Biblioteca Nacional, Lisbon, Cod. 6958, respectively ff. 89r and 88r, cited in Nery (1990, Vol. 1, pp. 289-90).

¹⁰ See the entry for William Bathe in Sadie ed. (1980, Vol. 2).

today with such a comprehensive collection of English music of this period. When I earlier described it as 'small', it was only in terms of its proportion within the library as a whole, which only serves to give us a sense of the vastness of what King João had brought together and the absolute priority he gave it.

One thing we are bound to speculate on, given that all the works cited are in part I of the published *Index*, is what would have been in Part II? We do not know whether Part II was in fact published but lost, or whether it never came to be published in the first place. Taking just the English music, it would perhaps be foolish to try to come to any clear conclusion, but if the contents of the rest of the library as indicated in Part I were analysed and were to reveal a picture similar to that of English music, there are two obvious areas that Part II might have included. Firstly, such gaps as there are might have been filled – the Campion lute songs, for example. Perhaps some more Anglican music? More importantly, given that the latest publication mentioned in Part I dates from 1630, ten years before King João even came to the throne, we could reasonably suppose that Part II would have contained the more recent publications that we know he continued to collect throughout his reign.

We are bound to ask what use was made of the library. The fact of the matter is that this was in every sense a private library. It was not even a court library available to the court musicians in general. It was the Duke, later King's personal library and great care was taken not to admit anyone without his personal authorisation. Apart from the musicians who sang the works each afternoon for his personal edification and evaluation, probably the only other person with regular access would have been João Lourenço Rebelo, his comrade in study.¹¹

And how far the King and Rebelo ever actually looked at the volumes of English music, well, who knows?

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¹¹ On this vexed question, see Nery (1990, Vol. I, 249-64).

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