



Francisco López Capillas, First Great Native New-World Composer: Reflections on the Discovery of His Will

Lester D. Brothers

“THE HISTORY OF New World [Cathedral] music—in the first century, at least—belongs to Spain.”¹ The extant oeuvre of the earliest maestros de capilla at work in Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and what are now Bolivia and Colombia, continues proving this assertion to be as true now as it was when I first made it in 1975.

However, in that year, we still had reason to consider all the foremost maestros—among them Hernando Franco (1532–1585) in Guatemala and Mexico; Gutierre Fernández Hidalgo (ca. 1553–ca. 1620) successively at Bogotá, Quito, Cuzco, and what is now Sucre; Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (ca. 1590–1664) at Puebla; and Francisco López Capillas (ca. 1608–1674) at Puebla and Mexico City—as being immigrants from the Spanish peninsula. López Capillas’s having modelled his *Re Sol* Mass on a canción by the Juan de Riscos who was chapelmaster at Jaén 1598–1643 gave grounds for presuming López to have studied with the Jaén maestro.² Also, the

high quality of López’s other Masses copied in Manuscript M. 2428 at the Madrid Biblioteca Nacional afforded additional reason for supposing him to have originated in the peninsula. Only the erudition of such seventeenth-century peninsular composers of Masses as Diego Pontac and Juan del Vado equalled the learning displayed in López Capillas’s *Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui* (a Palestrina parody) and hexachord Masses.

In their catalogue of music in the Madrid Biblioteca Nacional Higinio Anglés and José Subirá ascribed the works in MS M. 2428 to a Francisco Miguel López who died at Saragossa in 1723.³ However, Robert Stevenson in 1970 showed that the contents of MS M. 2428 concord with the Masses of López Capillas in Choirbooks VI, VII, and VIII at Mexico City Cathedral, and with the same composer’s Magnificats now at the Viceroyal Museum in Tepotzotlán.⁴ Thus, the Spanish manuscript documents the prowess of a mid-seventeenth-century composer in Mexico, not that of Francisco Miguel López in Spain.

¹Higinio Anglés and José Subirá, *Catálogo Musical de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*, 1 [Catálogos de la Música antigua conservada en España, 1] (Barcelona, 1946), 228–230.

²Robert Stevenson, “The First New World Composers: Fresh Data from Peninsular Archives,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, xxiii (1970), 106.

³See Lester D. Brothers, “16th-Century Spanish Musicians in the New World,” paper delivered at the Forty-First Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Los Angeles, California, October 31, 1975, published under the same title in *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* [Journal of the South-Central Renaissance Conference], iv (1978), 1–16.

⁴Brothers, “A New-World Hexachord Mass by Francisco López Capillas,” *Yearbook for Inter-American Musical Research*, ix (1973), 9.



As part of my doctoral dissertation⁵ I undertook a study of López Capillas's *Missa Super Scalam Aretinam* and published the results in the *Yearbook for Inter-American Musical Research*.⁶ Next, JoAnn Smith embarked on a University of Southern California dissertation dealing with all the works in the Madrid manuscript. But after she abandoned any hope for the Ph.D. degree she left it to Robert Johnson to complete a dissertation on the Magnificats.⁷ Although Smith did share her transcription of one of the Magnificats with Bruno Turner of London, who included it in the Pro Cantione Antiqua repertory, a more accessible gift to those interested in the sound of López's music resulted when a motet and two Alleluias were recorded in Roger Wagner's 1975 album sponsored by the University of California, Los Angeles, Latin American Center, *Festival of Early Latin American Music*,⁸ and in 1977 when Wagner recorded Kyrie II of López's *Missa Super Scalam Aretinam* and the exceedingly learned Agnus II of his *Missa Quam pulchri sunt gressus* in *Latin American Musical Treasures from the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries*.⁹

Wagner's pioneer performances have in the interim whetted the appetites of connoisseurs and church musicians alike for more information concerning the composer, and above all for complete recordings of López's larger works. So far as López Capillas's having been a nativeborn Mexican is concerned, the composer's last will and testament¹⁰ (discovered by Robert Stevenson, who announced his

find in a 1977 issue of *Heterofonia*,¹¹) settles the question. The will begins thus:

In the name of almighty God, Amen, be it noted that I, Licenciado Don Francisco López Capilla, prebendary chapelmaster of the holy cathedral of this city of Mexico, resident and native of this city, legitimate son of Bartolomé López and María de la Trinidad, my deceased parents, being confined to bed from the infirmity that God has seen fit to give me, and in full possession of my faculties. . . .

and then continues with the customary statement of faith.

For our present purposes, the most valuable information from the opening statement is, of course, that López was no emigrant, but a native of Mexico City. His social class and higher degree are indicated by his having been "Licenciado Don Francisco López Capilla." The designation "Don" in his day still meant something above common-folk.¹² What level of accomplishment did his having obtained the degree of licentiate imply? One author assesses higher education in early seventeenth-century Mexico thus:¹³

The Jesuits were fast providing the Creoles with the reading, writing, and Latin they had lacked, raising the level of their hopes and encouraging them to regard themselves as the intellectual, physical, and moral equals of the peninsulars. The improvement was reflected at the University in Mexico City, which attained academic standards in this period which impressed a number of European Spanish scholars. Vázquez de Espinosa, writing in the second decade of the century, asserted that the accomplishments of the university students were of a high order and cited this as proof that the Mexican climate was not in fact uncondusive to intellectual development.

Francisco López Capilla (= Capillas), as chapelmaster, and even more so as *racionero* (that is, as holder of an important benefice bringing substantial

⁵ Brothers, "The Hexachord Mass: 1600-1720," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles (1973), 233-284.

⁶ In "A New-World Hexachord Mass," I studied not only López's hexachord Mass but also the exquisite calligraphy throughout Madrid MS M. 2428.

⁷ Completed in 1987 at the University of Arizona.

⁸ *Festival of Early Latin American Music* [recording], Roger Wagner Chorale, Roger Wagner, Conductor, Eldorado S-1 (UCLA Latin American Center).

⁹ *Latin American Musical Treasures from the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries* [recording], Roger Wagner Chorale, Roger Wagner, conductor. Eldorado S-2 (UCLA Latin American Center). For the scores of López's works recorded under Roger Wagner's direction see Robert Stevenson, *Latin American Colonial Music Anthology* (Washington, D.C.: General Secretariat, Organization of American States, 1975), 235-246, and *Inter-American Music Review*, vii/1 (Fall-Winter 1985), 57-67.

¹⁰ Archivo General de Notarías del Distrito Federal, Francisco de Quiñones, Libro 547Q (olim 325) 1674, fol. 8-11^v.

¹¹ Stevenson, "Primeros Compositores Nativos de Mexico," *Heterofonia*, x/3 (1977), 4; and "Esteban Sales y Castro, Primer Compositor Nativo de Cuba," *Heterofonia*, x/4 (1977), 4.

¹² Stevenson, *Christmas Music from Baroque Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 72, observes that no seventeenth-century Puebla Cathedral chapelmaster represented in the Sánchez Garza collection of villancicos enjoyed the rank of "Don." Nor was "Don" applied to the first Mexico City Cathedral chapelmasters (Jésus Estrada, *Música y músicos de la época virreinal* [Mexico, 1973], 89).

¹³ J. I. Israel, *Race, Class, and Politics in Colonial Mexico 1610-1670* (London, 1975), 89-90. This is the source from which these general remarks are drawn.

remuneration), showed what degree it was possible for even a Mexico City-born musician to achieve. Moreover, his will attests wealth. This is not altogether surprising, for as late as 1742, some seventy years after the composer's death, the then Mexico City Cathedral organist (Juan Téllez Xirón) recalled that López's income had included 1,000 pesos in *rentas* alone, not to mention *obenciones*.¹⁴

The assets specified in the will included valuable silver items, an organ already disposed of, a set of three *violones*, and numerous paintings (Bachiller Don Francisco de Escobar y Orsuschil being allowed a choice of three). He also possessed considerable real estate. At his death he owned two "pairs of houses," each consisting of a larger building plus an accessory structure. One he had bought from the Sisters of Santa Clara (for which he still owed 1,500 pesos; he also owed Jesús María Convent 1,000 pesos). The second was a plantation manor which he had rebuilt and farmed.

Debts authorized for immediate payment totalled 953 pesos, 631 of which are accounted for by three items: one, to a local merchant, Pedro de Almansa; the second for [wrought] iron work (perhaps as part of his plantation improvements); and the third to Antonio de Robles, majordomo of the Cathedral—190 pesos, "more or less according to his judgment." He owed Cosme de Onendieta, apparently a pawnbroker, fifty pesos. Additionally, he held on deposit some 500 pesos for Inés de San José, a nun of the convent of Santa Catalina de Sena.

So far as contributions to religious causes go: he left twenty pesos to the Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in the Mexico City Cathedral, five pesos to the Archconfraternity of the Souls of Purgatory, five for "Los santos lugares de Jerusalén," and five to promote the beatification of Gregorio López, whose canonization, proposed by royal *cédula* in 1635, was being promoted by the University of Mexico faculty in "Claustro Pleno" during October 1674.¹⁵ At one peso each, he endowed 500 Masses to be recited for his soul in the cathedral chapel of Nuestra Señora de Antigua, where he was to be interred.¹⁶

¹⁴Mexico City Cathedral, *Actas Capitulares* [hereafter A.C.], xxxvi (1741–1744), fol. 35^v (January 30, 1742).

¹⁵Cristóbal Bernardo de la Plaza y Jaén, *Crónica de la Real y Pontificia Universidad de México* (México, 1931), I, 332 (Book IV, paragraph 39).

¹⁶Lines 25–26 may possibly be unrelated to those calling for the reciting of 500 Masses (lines 22–24).

His generosity to personal associates is reflected in 652 pesos divided among his executor and witnesses: María de San José, nun of the white veil in the convent of San José de García; the previously mentioned Inés de San José, nun of the convent of Santa Catalina de Sena; and his three servants. Fifty were to be paid Simón de Frías (majordomo of the chapel in which he was to be interred) for the purpose of decorating his resting place. Doña Isabel de Mafara y Vargas inherited his silver utensils and the two manors with all accessories (in usufruct)—the mortgage and other expenses to be paid out of the rents she was to receive for the remainder of her life. His papers and books of music were to be delivered to the Cathedral. All remaining goods were to be shared equally by his three sisters: Leonor, Elena, and Jerónima López de la Trinidad. (Can the Leonor who played bass for one Gutiérrez de Padilla villancico in the Sánchez Garza collection, and who is specified as a singer in another, have been the Leonor who was a member of the Mexico City chapelmaster's family?) Another relation specifically identified in the will was a nephew, Don Agustín de San Cristóbal, to whom López owed fifty pesos (lines 100–102 indicate that he had still other relatives, including Escobar y Orsuschil).

Finally, the will confirms López's year of death.


The date of López Capillas's death [January 18, 1673] given by Antonio de Robles in his *Diario de Sucesos Notables* (1665–1703) does not tally with the *Actas Capitulares* entry of February 7, 1673. [Even] as late as May 7, 1673, when his full prebend was effective, no mention was made of his decease. However, the fact that this date was not recorded [by Robles] at the alleged time of the composer's death is suspicious; the *Actas Capitulares* should be considered more accurate in this case.¹⁷

We must therefore conclude that Antonio de Robles, majordomo of the cathedral and intimate of the composer, erred by a year. López's will is dated January 13, 1674,¹⁸ and he died five days later.

¹⁷Stevenson, *Christmas Music*, 13.

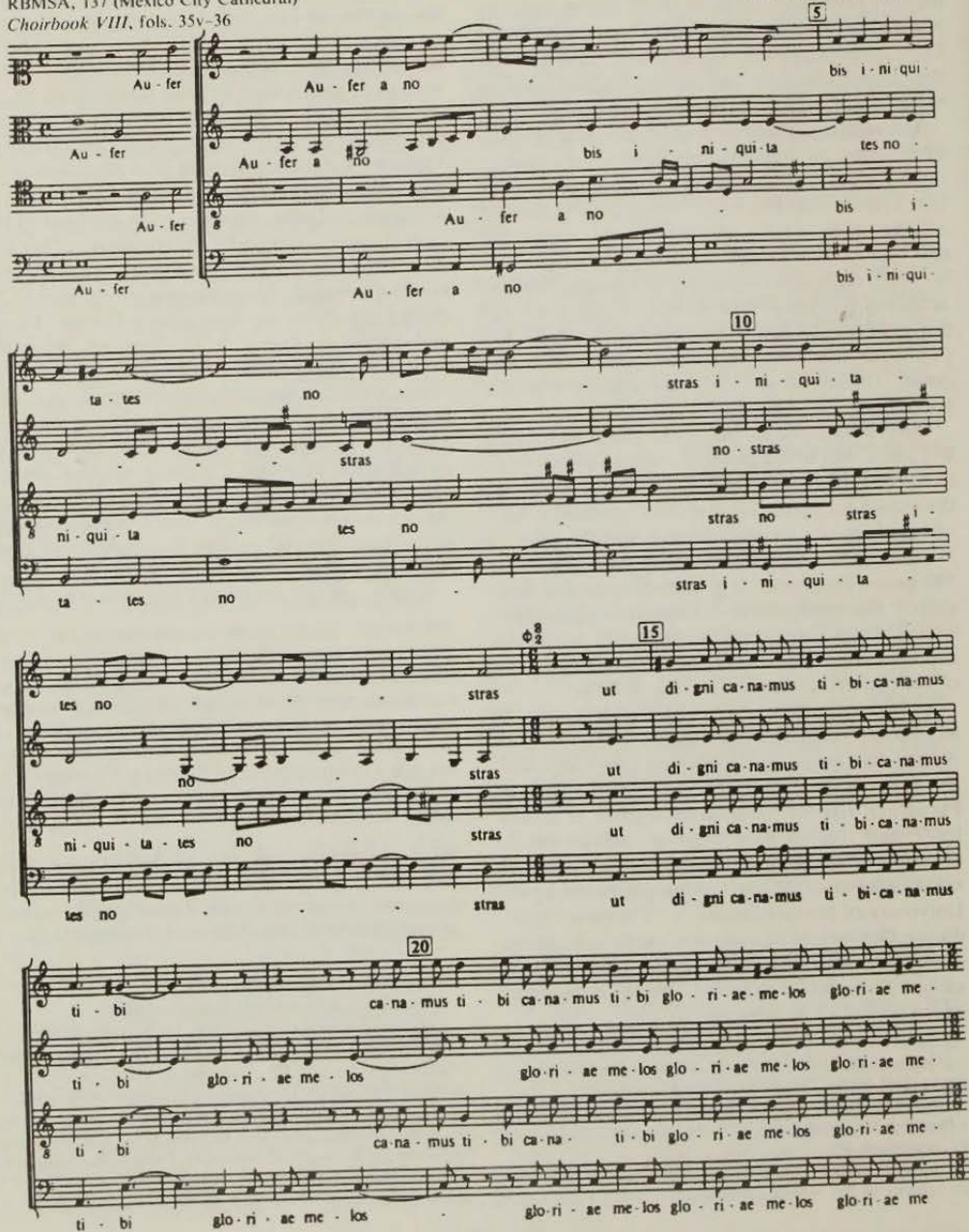
¹⁸Brothers, "A New-World Hexachord Mass," 8.

¹⁹Witnesses were: Lic. Juan López Luján, presbítero; Padre Fray Juan de Úbeda; Padre Fray Pedro de Contreras of the order of San Agustín; Dr. Ambrosio de Lima; and Bernardo Enriquez del Castillo. Two musicians mentioned in the will may be identified: one of López's executors, Br. Dn. Francisco de Escobar y Orsuschil, and Diego de León, both of whom served the Cathedral to the end of the century. From no later than 1656 Orsuschil had been an assistant organist and tuner, and in 1673 León was listed as a choirboy in the Cathedral. Stevenson


 Aufer a nobis

 RBMSA, 137 (Mexico City Cathedral)*
 Choirbook VIII, fols. 35v-36

Francisco López Capillas



Au - fer Au - fer a no bis i - ni qui
 Au - fer Au - fer a no bis i - ni - qui - ta tes no
 Au - fer Au - fer a no bis i -
 Au - fer Au - fer a no bis i - ni qui -

ta - tes no stras i - ni - qui - ta
 stras no - stras
 ni - qui - ta tes no stras no - stras
 ta - tes no stras i - ni - qui - ta

tes no stras ut di - gni ca - na - mus ti - bi - ca - na - mus
 no stras ut di - gni ca - na - mus ti - bi - ca - na - mus
 ni - qui - ta - tes no stras ut di - gni ca - na - mus ti - bi - ca - na - mus
 tes no stras ut di - gni ca - na - mus ti - bi - ca - na - mus

ti - bi ca - na - mus ti - bi ca - na - mus ti - bi glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me -
 ti - bi glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me -
 ti - bi ca - na - mus ti - bi ca - na - ti - bi glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me -
 ti - bi glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me - los glo - ri - ae - me

*RBMSA = Renaissance and Baroque Musical Sources in the Americas (Washington: General Secretariat, Organization of American States, 1970).



25 30

los me - los qui - bus in - di - gni om - ni la - u - de la -

los me - los qui - bus in - di - gni - om - ni lau - de lau - de om - ni

los me - los qui - bus in - di - gni om - ni la - u - de om - ni la -

los me - los qui - bus in - di - gni om - ni lau -

35

u - de, om - ni la - u - de la u - de di -

la - u - de om - ni la - u - de om - ni la - u - de di -

u - de om - ni lau - de om - ni lau - de om - ni lau - de di -

de om - ni lau - de om - ni lau - de di -

40

gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus

gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus lau - da - mus

gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus

gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus lau - da - mus

45 50

di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus col - lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus lau - da - mus.

di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus col - lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus.

di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus col - lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus lau - da - mus.

di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus col - lau - da - mus di - gnis - si - mam col - lau - da - mus lau - da - mus lau - da - mus.

Gloria laus et honor

RBMSA, 137 (Mexico City Cathedral)

Francisco López Capillas

Chairbook VIII

5

Glo - ri - a laus et ho - nor ti - bi sit Rex

Glo - ri - a laus et ho - nor ti - bi sit

Glo - ri - a laus et ho - nor ti - bi sit Rex

Glo - ri - a laus et ho - nor ti -

10

sit Rex Chri - ste Re - dem - ptor cui pu - e - ri -

Rex sit Rex Chri - ste Re - dem - ptor cui pu - e - ri - le

Chri - ste sit Rex Chri - ste Re - dem - ptor cui -

bi sit Rex Chri - ste Re - dem - ptor cui pu - e - ri - le de -

15

le de - cus cui - pue - ri - le de - cus prom - psit Ho - san - na pi -

de - cus cui - pu - e - ri - le de - cus prom - psit Ho - san - na pi -

pu - e - ri - le de - cus de - cus prom - psit

cus prom - psit prom - psit Ho -

20

um ho - san - na pi - um ho - san - na pi - um. um.

um ho - san - na pi - um.

Ho - san - na pi - um Ho - san - na pi - um.

san - na pi - um Ho - san - na pi - um Ho - san - na pi - um.

Is - ra - el es tu Rex, Da - vi - dis et in - cly - ta pro - les: No - mi - ne qui in Do - mi - ni. Rex be - ne - dic - te. ve - nis.

2 Alleluias (Palm Sunday and Easter)

Francisco López Capillas

RBMSA, 137 (Mexico City Cathedral)

Choirbook 1/III

Fol 68v

Fol 69

Fol 68v

Fol 69

Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

5

lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

10

le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

15

al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia



Choirbook VIII

69^v 5

Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

70 Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

69^v Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

70 Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

10

al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

15

Dic no - bis Ma - ri - a quid vi - dis - ti in vi - a

Se - pul - chrum Chri - sti vi -

Dic no - bis Ma - ri - a quid vi - dis - ti in - a

Se - pul - chrum Chri - sti vi -

20

ven - tis et glo - ri - am vi - di et glo - ri - am vi - di re - sur - gen - tis re - sur - gen - tis.

ven - tis et glo - ri - am vi - di et glo - ri - am vi - di re - sur - gen - tis re - sur - gen - tis.

25

Al - le - lu - ia al - le lu - ia

Al - le lu - ia al - le lu - ia

Al - le lu - ia al - le lu - ia

Al - le - lu - ia al - le

30

al - le - lu - ia - al - le - lu - ia.

al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia.

ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia.

lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia.

35

40

Dic no - bis Ma - ri - a quid vi - dis - ti in vi - a

Se - pul - chrum Chri - sti vi -

Dic no - bis Ma - ri - a quid vi - dis - ti in vi - a

Se - pul - chrum Chri - sti vi -

45

ven - tis et glo - ri - am vi - di re - sur - gen - tis re - sur - gen - tis.

ven - tis et glo - ri - am vi - di re - sur - gen - tis re - sur - gen - tis.



Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia
 Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia
 Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia
 Al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia
 al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia
 ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia
 lu - ia al - le - lu - ia al - le - lu - ia

Sci - mus Chris - tum sur - rex - is - se a mor - tu - is ve - re ve - re
 Sci - mus Chris - tum sur - rex - is - se a mor - tu - is ve - re ve - re
 Sci - mus Chris - tum sur - rex - is - se a mor - tu - is ve - re ve - re
 Sci - mus Chris - tum sur - rex - is - se a mor - tu - is ve - re ve - re

tu no - bis vic - tor Rex mi - se - re - re A - men.
 tu no - bis vic - tor Rex mi - se - re - re A - men.
 tu no - bis vic - tor Rex mi - se - re - re A - men.
 tu no - bis vic - tor Rex mi - se - re - re A - men.

Agnus Dei (III)

Missa Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui

RBMSA, 138 (Mexico City Cathedral)

Francisco López Capillas

Choirbook VI

Fol. 19v

Ego sum Alpha, et Omega

5

Agnus Dei

A - gnus De - i A - gnus De - i qui tol - lis pec -

Cantus II = Cantus I
in Cancrizans

A - gnus De - i A - gnus de - i qui tol - lis

Fol. 20

Incipiat in novissimo loco

Agnus Dei

A - gnus De - i qui tol - lis qui

Cantus II = Altus I
in Cancrizans

A - gnus De - i A - gnus De - i qui tol - lis

Ad locum vnde exierūt revertuntur

Agnus Dei

A - gnus De - i A - gnus De - i

Bassus II = Bassus I
in Cancrizans

A - gnus De - i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta pec - ca - ta mun - di qui

10

ca - ta mun - di pec - ca - ta mun - di pec - ca - ta pec -

pec - ca - ta mun - di qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta

tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di A - gnus De - i qui tol - lis

A - gnus Dei qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta qui tol - lis pec -

qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di

tol - lis pec - ca - ta pec - ca - ta mun - di qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di qui



15

ca - ta mun - di pec - ca - ta mun - di mun - di do - na
 pec - ca - ta mun - di pec - ca - ta mun - di do - na no - bis
 pec - ca - ta mun - di pec - ca - ta mun - di do - na
 ca - ta pec - ca - ta mun - di do - na no
 pec - ca - ta mun - di do - na no
 tol - lis pec - ca - ta pec - ca - ta mun - di do - na

20 25

no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis do - na no -
 pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na
 no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis do - na no -
 bis do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis do - na no - bis
 bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis
 no - bis pa - cem do - na do - na do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no -



30

bis do - na no bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem pa - cem pa - cem.
 no bis pa - cem do - na no - bis do - na pa - cem pa - cem pa - cem.
 bis do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem no - bis pa - cem.
 do - na no - bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem no - bis pa - cem.
 do - na no - bis pa - cem no - bis pa - cem pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem.
 bis pa - cem do - na no - bis pa - cem no - bis pa - cem.

Kyrie (II)

Missa Super scalam Aretinam a5

Francisco López Capillas

RBMSA, 141 (Mexico City Cathedral)

Choirbook VII

Fol. 4v
Tiple Kyrie Ky - ri - e - lei son Ky - ri - e e -

Fol. 5
Altus 1 Kyrie Ky ri e

Altus 2 Kyrie Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son

Fol. 4v
Tenor Kyrie

Fol. 5
Bassus Kyrie Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky



3

lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e -

e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei -

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri -

Ky - ri - e

ri - e Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei -

10

lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei -

son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky -

e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei -

e - lei - son Ky

son Ky - ri - e e - lei -

15

son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son

ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.

son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.

ri - e e - lei - son.

son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son Ky - ri - e e - lei - son.

While the will is a considerable boon, enabling us as it does to establish an important historical position for the chapelmaster as not only the first native Mexican, but also the first great native New World composer, it provides no hint as to where López might have gained his obviously superior musical education. Jesús Estrada suggested that he entered the choir of the Mexico City Cathedral by 1625.²⁰ If so, he studied with Antonio Rodríguez de Mata, chapelmaster at the Mexico City Cathedral from 1614 to 1643.

Although one can only speculate on López's first music instruction, we may perhaps be more certain about his university education. In Cristóbal Bernardo de la Plaza y Jaén's *Crónica de la Real y Pontificia Universidad de México* (see note 15), chapter 33 of Book III concludes: "54 students were graduated with the Bachelor of Arts degree; in the faculty of theology, the Bachelors Juan de Loyo, Francisco López,"²¹ and five other persons. All other entries under "Francisco López" in the chronicle are further identified with a third name. Since the composer could only have added the appellation "Capilla" or "Capillas" after his chapelmastership (witness the absence of this in the Puebla accounts) we may here be meeting none other than our composer. The date of graduation, August 20, 1626, would place the birthdate of an eighteen-year-old *Bachiller* in 1608 (which squares with the long presumed date of between 1605 and 1610). In the decade that López earned his bachelor's degree Vázquez de Espinosa testified to the quality of Mexico university education in his *Descripción de la Nueva España*.²² Obviously López continued his education, for from 1647 on he is identified as *Licenciado* in Puebla and Mexico City documents (the recipients of this degree are not specified in Bernardo de la Plaza y Jaén's account). Thus, even though in Puebla López was *Bachiller* on January 11, 1647, and *Licenciado* on January 15, 1647, we may assume he earned the

licentiate degree perhaps no earlier than Fall (the usual time for awarding degrees), 1646.

Where López spent the fifteen years between 1626 and 1641 remains as yet undetermined. In 1641 he won the approval of the great Puebla chapelmaster Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla (*ca.* 1590–1664), who in that year endorsed him for the position of organist and *bajón*-player at a salary of 400 pesos—apparently without public competition.²³ The chief Puebla Cathedral organist was then Pedro Simón, whose record is studded with frequent and rather extended absences. Thus, for instance, López deputized for the peripatetic Pedro Simón (who as an organ builder was in great demand throughout New Spain) from September 1, 1643, to January 15, 1644; a further two months by July 15, 1644; and for eight months from May 11, 1646, to January 11, 1647.²⁴

In September of 1645 López was relieved from any further *bajón*-playing, except during Advent and Lent, when organs were silent. In 1647, he earned an additional 200 pesos for replacing Simón. Obviously displeased at so many absences, the cathedral chapter dismissed Simón for a second time on January 15, 1647, and promoted Francisco López to the full salary of 600 pesos.²⁵ When Simón returned, probably in July, the chapter offered him employment as a mere organ tuner. However, his services as instrument maker and repairer (he had been constructing *violones* for Puebla musicians) may have made him more indispensable than the Chapter was at first willing to acknowledge. At any rate, Simón managed to regain his former position on January 17, 1648, at López's expense (López losing 100 pesos in salary).²⁶ On May 2 the Mexico City Cathedral chapelmaster, Fabián Ximeno, was paid for inspecting the new large organ on a visit to Puebla²⁷ and on May 15 López quit.²⁸ Ximeno's nephew, Ygnacio Ximeno, succeeded López at the Puebla organ bench July 29.²⁹

But López was bound for greater glory, not at

(*Christmas Music*, 64) notes that "Orsulich still hung on in 1699 but had always been a poor player. February 16, 1700, someone proposed diverting 60 pesos of his pay to the up-and-coming teenage organist, Juan Téllez Xirón, but the more humane solution of retirement on full pay was accepted." León was still a member of the choir in 1695 (Stevenson, *Christmas Music*, 65).

²⁰ Estrada, 85.

²¹ Bernardo de la Plaza y Jaén, 1, 297.

²² *Descripción de la Nueva España en el siglo xvii por el padre Fray Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa y otros documentos del siglo xvii*, ed. Mariano Cuevas (Mexico, 1944), 127.

²³ Puebla Cathedral, A.C., xi, fol. 118'. The most complete documentary account of López's Puebla activities is in Stevenson, *Christmas Music*, 50, 55.

²⁴ Puebla, A.C., xi, fol. 194' (September 1, 1643); fol. 214 (January 15, 1644); fol. 231 (July 15, 1644); fol. 346 (January 11, 1647), here called *bachiller*.

²⁵ Puebla, A.C., xi, fol. 347 (January 15, 1647), called *licenciado*.

²⁶ Puebla, A.C., xii (1648–1652), fol. 6' (January 17, 1648).

²⁷ Puebla, A.C., xii, fol. 29 (May 2, 1648).

²⁸ Puebla, Cabildo of October 6, 1648.

²⁹ Puebla, A.C., xii, 49' (July 29, 1648).



Puebla but in the capital. On April 21, 1654, a mere four days after chapelmaster Fabián Ximeno's death (and without facing public competition), he was unanimously elected chapelmaster and organist of the Mexico City Cathedral at an annual salary of 500 pesos.¹⁰ Clearly he justified this honor. In 1656 the viceroy, the Duke of Albuquerque—perhaps after having overheard the singers rehearsing a Mass for four choirs written for the cathedral consecration ceremonies upcoming on February 2—commissioned on January 28 a similar work for the consecration of four bishops on July 25.¹¹ Unfortunately no Mexico City cathedral polychoral music survives, but we do have an account of the cathedral consecration; an eyewitness exclaims with wonderment at the achievement of López Capillas.¹²

Unlike Puebla, the Mexico City Cathedral at mid-century combined the positions of choir conductor and organist (composing was an additional expectation). Only for more solemn occasions would an assistant be called in. By 1661 double duty had become a burden to López, who complained to the Chapter. But, helpless to remedy the situation, it could offer no more than sympathy.¹³ Budget cuts characterized the 1660's at the Mexico City Cathedral and in 1664 López proposed to cut his services accordingly. He decided to dispense with the customary new music and extra performances at Christmas. "For 80 years," the chapter retorted, "Mexico City chapelmasters have been composing the villancicos, and if

López does not wish to continue doing so, a proper remedy will be found."¹⁴ (Ironically, not a single villancico by López survives, which is the more to be regretted because he was the first to compose villancicos in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe.)

Fortunately, the arrival of new archbishop Fray Payo Enriquez de Rivera in 1668 changed the outlook for López. In September, 1668, he was awarded a half prebend (*media ración*) and in the final year of his life, 1673, he was promoted to full prebend (*ración entera*).¹⁵ His suggestions for improvements, long unheeded, were now taken seriously. One of colonial Mexico's finest organists, Joseph Ydiáquez, was engaged in the newly-created position of principal organist, and in 1673 an extensive recruitment campaign was waged to strengthen the personnel of the choir.¹⁶

Thus, when López Capillas died in 1674, he left a renewed musical establishment at Mexico City. But an even more enduring legacy was the sum of his liturgical works that survive in Mexican and Spanish archives. Not his outstanding performance ability but rather his oeuvre entitles him to being called the Morning Star among native-born New World musicians. A complete assessment of his style must await a fuller study, but already we are assured that he was "the most profound and prolific composer of Masses in Mexican history"¹⁷—all evincing superb craft and erudition. Living in the same century as Juan Ruiz Alarcón (1581–1639) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695), he showed that Mexicans had no less to offer the world of music than they gave to the world of literature.

¹⁰Mexico City, A.C., xii, fol. 40^v (April 21, 1654). The best general treatment of Mexico City cathedral music for this period was Stevenson's "Mexico City Cathedral Music: 1600–1750," *The Americas*, xxi (1964), 111–135; Spanish translation in *Revista Musical Chilena*, xix (1965), 11–31. For a more detailed account of the first half of this period, see Stevenson's "Mexico City Cathedral Music, 1600–1675," in *Inter-American Music Review*, ix/1 (Fall–Winter 1987), 75–114.

¹¹Mexico City, A.C., xiii, fol. 16^v (January 28, 1656).

¹²Gregorio M. de Guijo, *Diario 1648–1664*, ed. Manuel Romero de Terreros [Colección de Escritores Mexicanos] (México, 1952), II, 5.

¹³Mexico City, A.C., xiv (1661–1662), fol. 40^v (September, 1661).

¹⁴Mexico City, A.C., xvi (1664–1667), fol. 122^v.

¹⁵*Documentos para la Historia de Méjico* (México, 1853), II, 70, 114. See also Antonio de Robles, *Diario de Sucesos Notables (1665–1703)*, ed. Antonio Castro Leal [Colección de Escritores Mexicanos] (México, 1946), I, 63, 104.

¹⁶Robles, 124–125.

¹⁷Stevenson, "Francisco López Capillas," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, viii (New York, 1967), 986. His article on López Capillas in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, xvi, 1157–1158, corrects misstatements in Alice Ray Catalyne's article, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, xi, 227.



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