

POST TEN



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A biographical note on the composer António de Oliveira

Not much is known about the Portuguese composer António de Oliveira, besides that he was active in the last decades of the sixteenth century. Much of what is known about him comes from the short entry of Diogo Barbosa Machado's *Bibliotheca Lusitana* and must be interpreted as accurate as the period in which the author gathered his information. According to Barbosa Machado, Oliveira was born in Lisbon. As a priest of exemplary life and a distinguished music teacher, he occupied the post of choirmaster at the royal parish of São Julião in Lisbon. He then moved to Rome where he died and left many works of sacred music (Barbosa Machado, 1741: 341).

Machado lists his musical production in very generic terms:

masses, psalms, motets, and villancicos. Of these, a great part is preserved at the Royal Music Library (lost in the Lisbon 1755 earthquake), citing the *Index* compiled by Paulo Craesbeeck in 1649 (Barbosa Machado, 1741: 341).

The 1649 *Index* mentions several works, precisely a *Quae est ista*, for six voices (probably a motet), *Responde mihi*, for eight voices (probably a responsory), and the five-voice villancicos *Que regozijo, y contento*, and *Un Zagal cortesano*, both for Christmas.

There are also three works that survived to present day, notably an *Alleluia* setting for four voices, an incomplete *Vidi aquam* antiphon and a mass setting. These are to be found in two small choirbooks dating from early seventeenth century from Arouca and Évora respectively.



António de Oliveira, *Missa [Sine nomine]*, Kyrie, 4vv.

This Kyrie is present in Manuscript Res. 32 of Regional Sacred Art Museum of the Monastery of Arouca, Portugal (P-AR), occupying folios 034v and 035r. It is part of a mass (identified as *Sine nomine*) it is attributed to the composer in the manuscript with the inscription *Oliveira.a.4*. This mass is complete (with movements from the Kyrie to the Agnus Dei) and, as the Kyrie suggests, is mostly set in a homophonic texture.

The *Alleluia* setting is found anonymously in the Arouca choirbook (folios 59v to 60r) and is attributed to Oliveira in the Évora choirbook (folios 33v to 34r). The marginalia note on f. 60r “mea mão no baixão” (literally, half a hand in the baixão) meant that

this work would have bajón (or dulcian) accompaniment (Carvalho, 2012: 22-24).

The antiphon *Vidi aquam* is present in the Évora choirbook (folios 33v to 37r). The work survives incomplete with only two voices being legible because of the corrosive ink has destroyed much of the book's folios (Alvarenga, 2011: 138).

António de Oliveira is still an obscure figure in the Portuguese Music History mostly because no documental references have been found in the archives about his life or musical career. Hopefully we may read in the future new evidence on the composer, besides the testimony of Barbosa Machado, both in an individual perspective or as a member of an institution, in Lisbon or Rome, the two cities where he developed his musical career.

Bibliography

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