


Fr. Simão dos Anjos (de Gouvea): a biographical note

Luís Henriques¹ 

¹ CESEM / University of Évora, IN2PAST

Summary

Fr. Simão dos Anjos was a composer whose career developed in the last years of the sixteenth century and first decades of the seventeenth century. He was a friar of the Secular Canons of St. John the Evangelist and worked in Lisbon, Tomar, and Coimbra. Despite living during the so-called *Golden Age* of Portuguese polyphony, not much is known of his life and career. In this text, gathering the available bibliographical references, we share some notes on his life and work.

Not much is known of the early-seventeenth century composer Fr. Simão dos Anjos (also referenced as Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea or Simão de Gouvea) besides a couple of primary sources that fix his salary at Tomar. He may be included in a group of composers that, mostly due to the scarcity of musical compositions, remained in a secondary place when compared to other composers of the time as is the case of the best-known trio made by Fr. Manuel Cardoso, Duarte Lobo, or Filipe de Magalhães.

One of the first authors to mention Fr. Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea that we were able to find was Diogo Barbosa Machado. In the third volume of his *Bibliotheca Lusitana*, Simão dos Anjos is mentioned as one of the disciples of Manuel Mendes at the Évora Cathedral cloister, together with other names such as Manuel Rebelo, Duarte Lobo, Filipe de Magalhães, and a Francisco Mendes de Gouvea (Barbosa Machado, 1752, p. 308). Regarding Francisco Mendes de Gouvea, no references were found concerning a musician or composer by that name. Its inclusion after Simão dos Anjos suggests that it might have been a confusion with Simão dos Anjos' surname "de Gouvea" made by Barbosa Machado who used two names to identify the same person.

Active during the second half of the eighteenth century, the writer José Mazza (1735-1797) also mentioned Simão dos Anjos in his *Dicionário Biográfico* (1944). Mazza only states that he flourished around 1600 and was a pupil of Manuel Mendes, also mentioning this in Manuel Mendes's entry. José Augusto Alegria added a commentary footnote with the new research on the composer up to 1944 (Mazza, 1944, p. 40, 101-103). In all, Mazza seems to have repeated the brief text of Barbosa Machado.

In his *Diccionario Biographico* (1900), Portuguese musicographer Ernesto Vieira dedicated half a page to Simão dos Anjos. He states that he succeeded Pedro Thalesio in the post of chapel master at the Royal Hospital of Todos-os-Santos around 1600. In 1610 he requested the Chair of Music at Coimbra University but didn't obtain provision in that post. Barbosa Machado's statement that he had been a disciple of Manuel Mendes is also mentioned with the commentary that no other author mentioned his value as a composer, nor that any composition by him was listed in the *Index* of King João IV's music library which, according to Vieira, was a bad omen (Vieira, 1900, p. 35). Vieira, in his travel to Évora, found in the city's Public Library a composition by Simão dos Anjos, present in a seventeenth-century choirbook with works of Manuel Mendes, António de Oliveira, and "some anonymous" (Vieira, 1900, p. 35).

In a study about music in the city of Évora during the sixteenth century published in 1944, musicologist José Augusto Alegria shared an image of a composition by Simão dos Anjos, a facsimile of the motet *Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta* from the choirbook Cód.

CLI/1-3 preserved at Évora Public Library. This image appeared in the chapter dedicated to the composer Manuel Mendes (c.1547-1605) and his students, Simão dos Anjos being among them (probably citing Barbosa Machado). Alegria mentions that following the death of Pedro Correia, *Lente de Música* at the University of Coimbra since 13 October 1594, Gouvea had applied for that post but wasn't appointed. He further mentioned that Simão dos Anjos had been a Discalced Carmelite friar and that he had lived in the Convent of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios the order had in the city of Évora (Alegria, 1944, p. 125).

This latter statement by Alegria prompted me to verify the presence of Simão dos Anjos in the documentation of the Convent of Remédios at the beginning of the seventeenth century and, in fact, a Fr. Simão dos Anjos, appears identified in several documents (Henriques, 2018, p. 86-87). I have repeated this assumption that the Simão dos Anjos author of the motet *Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta* in the Cód. CLI/1-3 and the Discalced Carmelite friar Simão dos Anjos were the same person (Henriques, 2016, 2021). However, the recent finding of several documents transcribed by the historian Francisco de Sousa Viterbo in the 1910s has led me to rethink this assumption. Although published over a century ago these documents seemed to have been absent from the Alvarenga (2011) and Carvalho (2012) studies, more concerned with the philological aspects of the musical sources, but were mentioned (although overviewed) by Robert Stevenson in his anthology of Portuguese polyphony (1982) where the motet by Simão dos Anjos was included.

In the introduction to this anthology, regarding the biography of Simão dos Anjos, Stevenson mentioned that he was a student of Manuel Mendes at the Évora Cathedral *Claustra*, a statement most certainly taken from Vieira (1900), who he cites, adding his assumption that Gouvea had studied at the Évora *Claustra*. The presence of Gouvea, already as a friar of the Congregation of St. John the Evangelist, as chapel master at the Royal Hospital of Todos-os-Santos in Lisbon around 1600 was also mentioned, as well as his dispute for the post of *Lente de Música* at the University of Coimbra in 1611 following the death of Pedro Correia.



Image 1

Church of São João Baptista, Tomar, formerly a royal collegiate.

He added that for this post Gouvea was competing with Pedro Thalesio, whom he had succeeded at Todos-os-Santos, and had no success since the latter had a strong support “from Madrid”. This meant that Thalesio had the support of the Spanish crown or the Spanish-appointed administration of the Portuguese territory (Stevenson, 1982, p. XVII). Stevenson also points the known compositions by Simão dos Anjos: the above-mentioned motet *Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta* for four voices, from the Évora source, the hymn *O lingua mens*, and a four-voice *Alleluia* preserved in a choirbook originating from the feminine Cistercian monastery of Arouca (Stevenson, 1982, p. XVII-XVIII).

From the documentation transcribed by Sousa Viterbo (1910; 1912) we were able to gather some information regarding Gouvea’s career. It is mostly related to his staying in Coimbra and around the university, confirming that he had previously been chapel master at the Hospital of *Todos-os-Santos* in Lisbon (Sousa Viterbo, 1910: 164).



Image 2
Canon Secular of the Congregation of Saint John the Evangelist in
Portugal (Pierre Helyot, 1714-1719).

By 29 November 1611 he had been already working in Coimbra for nine months, that is, since February of that year. Gouvea intended to be appointed to the university’s Music Chair, which became vacant a few days before 29 November. He was a chaplain at the University and thus applied for the post in a way to be internally promoted in the institution’s ranks. In his petition, Gouvea stated that he was accomplished in his art and asked that the number of voters for the place would be augmented, probably to increase his chances to be elected for the job. The University’s Rector was consulted by the *Mesa de Consciência e Ordens* and, despite acknowledging his merits as a musician, was not favourable to Gouvea’s appointment to the Music Chair due to him not being eminent enough to occupy that prestigious post (Sousa Viterbo, 1910, p. 165). The Rector also

recommended that all of the University's theologians should vote in order to better choose the candidate for the Music Chair. The *Mesa de Consciência e Ordens* seemed to have accepted the Rector's recommendations and forwarded them to the Monarch to cancel any thoughts of appointing Gouvea to the Music Chair. All the correspondence and dates mentioned in this document transcribed by Sousa Viterbo show that Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea spent most of 1611 living and working in Coimbra.

There is an eleven-year gap in the references to Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea, his name appearing in documentation only in 1621. In that year or sometime during 1622, Gouvea was appointed as chapel master at the Church of S. João Evangelista in Tomar, a town not far from Coimbra, that was the seat of the powerful Order of Christ (Sousa Viterbo, 1911, p. 99). An uncompleted letter appointed him as chapel master as successor of António Moniz in that post, stating that Gouvea was a clergyman and that he was accomplished and of good manners. (Sousa Viterbo, 1911, p. 141).

However, in a letter dated 23 December 1622, Simão de Abreu, a clergyman from Tomar, was appointed as chapel master of the Church of S. João Evangelista. This followed the renouncement of that post by Simão dos Anjos for unknown motives (Sousa Viterbo, 1911, p. 141).

From this year on no more references were found of him suggesting that whether he died around 1622 or had moved to a music post in a more obscure institution.

Gathering from the above-referred biographical sources of Fr. Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea, we can trace his musical career, despite the lack of more detailed references, as well as an itinerary of the places and institutions where he worked.

Not much is known about Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea's music output only surviving a hand full of compositions with several identifications in the sources. The first of these compositions and what we can consider as the most extended one is the motet *Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta*, taking the respective antiphon text for the Palm Sunday. It survives in a choirbook now preserved at the Évora Public Library (P-Evp Cód. CLI/1-3, ff. 29v-30r). The choirbook results of a gathering of two parts. Whilst the first part, which includes the work by Simão dos Anjos) is datable around 1615, the second part is datable early, around 1575 (Alvarenga, 2011, p. 138). It is attributed in the source as "De Simão dos Anjos" which has been assumed to be Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea (Alvarenga, 2011, p. 133). It is scored for four voices (SATB) using high clefs, in a somewhat mixture of brief imitative sections interspersed with homophony (Henriques, 2021).



Simão dos Anjos de Gouvea
Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta
(Évora Public Library, Cód. CLI/1-3)

Still in the Évora sources we find another composition which is a setting of *Jesu Redemptor*, a polyphonic section used in the litany *pro defunctis*. It is found in a choirbook, now preserved in the Évora Districtal Archive (P-EVad Códice 44 (olim Mús. Lit. Ms. n.º 48), ff. 33v-34r), which bears the year 1617 on the front page decorations, thus suggesting it was copied during that year. Owen Rees suggested that this choirbook originated at the Convent of Lóios (Convent of St John the Evangelist of the Congregation of the Canons of St John the Evangelist) of Évora, supporting this on the mid-twentieth-century Portuguese musicologist Manuel Joaquim's shelf-mark note "Lóios – Arq. Ecl. Sala G" (Rees, 2011, p. 233). Although the source of this choirbook is still not confirmed, Joaquim had assumed that it would have originated at the Convent of Lóios because of the presence of a composition of Simão dos Anjos (also a member of that congregation), thus associating it with that religious house of Évora.

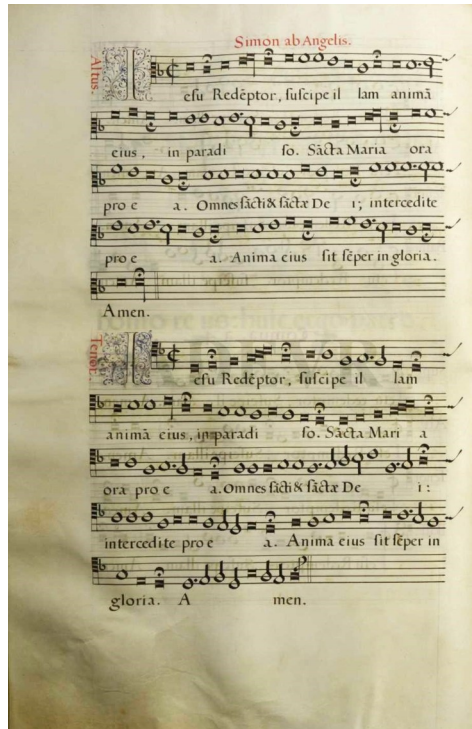


Image 3

First page of the *Jesu Redemptor* (P-EVad Mús. Lit. 48).

The work is attributed in the source to “Simon ab Angelis”, and it was scored for four voices (AATB).

Besides these two compositions present in Évora sources, two more appear in a choirbook originated at the feminine Cistercian Monastery of Santa Maria of Arouca (P-AR Res. Ms. 32), copied between 1610 to 1620 (Carvalho, 2012, p.

The first is the hymn *Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus* (ff. 16v-17r), of which the second verse *O lingua mens* was set to polyphony by Simão dos Anjos. It is attributed in the first folio to “Simão dos Anjos”, and the work was scored for four voices (AATB). This hymn was intended for the office of Vespers on Sundays in the Cistercian Rite

The last work we were able to identify, and the second present in the Arouca choirbook is an Alleluia setting (ff. 57v-58r) with a textless versicle, also scored for four voices (SSAT).

One interesting aspect regarding the manuscript sources that preserve the known compositions by Simão dos Anjos is that, from what we were able to gather, they were all copied during the composer’s lifetime. The two Évora sources are datable around 1615 to 1617, whilst the Arouca source is datable to a wider period but also in the same time frame than the Évora ones. This suggests that Gouveia might have contributed, to some extent, with some small-scale compositions to a wider musical-liturgical context suppressing any need of the institutions where the choirbooks originated. This would mean that there was some kind of acquaintance between composers and chapel masters. If in the context of Évora, we can identify a possible connection with the Collegiate of Santo Antão through Manuel Mendes, and in the case of the Convent of Lóios through his religious affiliation, the case of Arouca is more elusive, demanding a further examination of any

hypothetical links to the institutions where he worked in Tomar or Coimbra. A possible link between Arouca and Simão dos Anjos might have been through the Congregation of St John the Evangelist. In her study of the Arouca choirbook copyists, Ana Carvalho stated that, in the seventeenth century, three choirbooks were commissioned to a copyist from the Congregation of St John the Evangelist (Carvalho, 2012, p. 19). There were at least three choirbooks commissioned that, although no names are mentioned, the indication “escreveu hum religioso da congregação de S. João Evangelista” (a religious from the congregation of St John the Evangelist wrote it) makes them clearly identifiable: a Winter *graduale sanctorale* dated from 1664, a Winter *graduale temporale* from 1666, and a Lent *antiphonale temporale* from 1667.

Although these are sources from the mid seventeenth century, they confirm that a link between the Monastery and the Congregation existed regarding the production of music-liturgical books which implied the circulation of repertory, in this case monodic, but that could have been also polyphonic.

In sum, Simão dos Anjos de Gouveia is still an obscure figure in the panorama of the Portuguese music history of the first half of the seventeenth century, occupying a secondary, or even tertiary place in the line with other well-known composer such as Fr. Manuel Cardoso, Duarte Lobo, or Filipe de Magalhães. However, Gouveia is a fine example of the universe of composers, chapel masters, and other musicians of high quality that circulated between the Portuguese religious institutions of the time, as well as the high standards of the music service in those places.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Alegria, J. A. (1944). A Música em Évora no século XVI (Tentativa de Esboço Histórico) II. *A Cidade de Évora*, (7-8), 118-132.
- Alvarenga, J. P. d' (2011). Manuscript Évora, Biblioteca Pública, Cód. CLI/1-3: Its Origin and Contents, and the Stemmata of Late-Sixteenth- and Early-Seventeenth- Century Portuguese Sources. *Anuario Musical*, (66), 137-158.
- Barbosa Machado, D. (1752). *Bibliotheca Lusitana. Tomo III*. Na Officina de Ignacio Rodrigues.
- Carvalho, A. (2012). *O Códice Polifônico de Arouca. Estudo e Transcrição* [Master's thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa]. RUN Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/10362/9132>
- Henriques, L. (2018). A atividade litúrgico-musical no convento de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios de Évora: o seu papel na paisagem sonora da cidade durante o século XVII. *Herança – Revista de História, Património e Cultura*, 1(1), 73-92.
- Henriques, L. (2021). *Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta* by Simão dos Anjos. *Canto Mensurable blog*, 1, 29-33.
- Henriques, L. (Ed.). (2016). *Simão dos Anjos de Gouveia: Jesu Redemptor; Pueri Hebraeorum vestimenta*. Polyphonia 37. Edições MPMP.
- Mazza, J. (1944). *Dicionário Biográfico de Músicos Portugueses – com prefácio e notas do P.º José Augusto Alegria*. Tipografia da Editorial Império.
- Rees, O. (2011). 'Jesu Redemptor': Polyphonic Funerary Litanies in Portugal. In T. Knight, & B. Nelson (Eds.). *Pure Gold: Golden Age Sacred Music in the Iberian World. A Homage to Bruno Turner* (pp. 228-261). Edition Reichenberger.
- Sousa Viterbo, F. de. (1911). A Ordem de Christo e a musica sagrada nas suas igrejas do continente. *O Instituto*, 58, 96-103.
- Sousa Viterbo, F. de (1910). Dois lentes na cadeira de Música da Universidade – Simão dos Anjos de Gouveia e fr. Nuno da Conceição. *A Arte Musical*, (279), 165-166.

- Stevenson, R. (1982). *Antologia de Polifonia Portuguesa (1490-1680)*. Portugaliae Musica XXXVII. Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Vieira, E. (1900). *Diccionario Biographico de Muzicos Portuguezes Vol. 1*. Lambertini.



Cite this text: Henriques, L. (2023). Fr. Simão dos Anjos (de Gouvea): a biographical note. *Canto Mensurable* blog. <https://cantomensurable.hcommons.org/simao-anjos-gouvea/>