

## Francisco Correa de Arauxo, 1583(84?)<sup>1</sup>-1654

The few available biographical data tell us that Francisco Correa de Arauxo (or de Acevedo)<sup>2</sup> was born in Seville and baptized probably in September 1584.<sup>3</sup> As a choirboy, he could have been in contact with Peraza, Diego del Castillo and Guerrero, although it is uncertain whether or not he was musically educated at the Cathedral. He was appointed organist of the Salvador, the second church in Seville, in 1599, and ordained priest probably in 1608. His relationship with the clergy however does not seem to have been always friendly: reports were found of various accusations, disciplinary actions or lawsuits, against or introduced by him, about incidents like problems with keys, money, rude speaking and misbehaviour inside the church building, substitutes, etc., the court ruling sometimes for one party, sometimes for the other. That means that he was not always right, not always wrong, not always peaceful and not always aggressive, but certainly a man of strong temperament.

The *Facultad* was published in 1626. Correa repeatedly mentions two other books: a book of *versos* (liturgical organ verses), leaving unclear whether it was a project completed or uncompleted, and a treatise on *punto intenso contra punto remisso* and other 'moral cases' of music, which he announces as written, but not yet published.

After several unsuccessful attempts to become organist of the Cathedral, he accepted an offer to take the main position at the Cathedral of Segovia and remained there until his death, in spite of invitations by the Chapter of Seville to return home and take the office he had always wanted. He is buried in the Cathedral of Segovia.

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Not unlike J.S. Bach, Correa gives the image of an artist inbetween times, with one foot in tradition and establishment, and the other in revolution and novelty. The tension is evident: he firmly claims his inventions, but in the same breath, he protests that they all have already appeared in works by «very serious and very ancient authors», giving precise references. He openly, yet cautiously, bids farewell to the sacro-saint proportional system, and to the immutable and inflexible «*compas*». He reluctantly, but clearly, abandons the modal system without renouncing the terminology. In one word, he tries to base new practices on old theory, which he often has to twist for this purpose.

Correa seems to be first of all a virtuoso, but he manages to write a fairly coherent and good-sensed treatise, putting himself on one level with «*doctores y varones muy graves*», blessing some, and cursing others (and eventually intrincating himself into confusions and contradictions); but at the end, he declares that all this theory is not good for anything if one is not able to find the right fingering for difficult passages. He speaks about touch and manual agility, and considers that 'natural ability' is the first requirement for a good player.

So, Correa is and remains a *practico*, but that is precisely what makes the charm and usefulness of his treatise: a book written by a practical musician for practical musicians, which most of us are or would like to be. We can recognize in him a person with the same doubts and aspirations as ours, a human being speaking a language we can understand.

Finally, we must recognize the amazing beauty and genius of his music, a genius which sets him apart from all other Spanish, just as Frescobaldi from all other Italians, Grigny from all other French and Bach from all other German composers of their times.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. José Enrique Ayarra Jarne, *Sevilla en la vida y la obra del organista Francisco Correa de Arauxo*, Academia de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabel de Hungría, Sevilla 1981, separate print of: *Boletín de Bellas Artes*, 2ª Epoca, Num. IX, same publisher and year, pp. 17-22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.