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FROM MOZOS DE CORO TOWARDS SEISES  
BOYS IN THE MUSICAL LIFE OF SEVILLE CATHEDRAL  
IN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

Juan Ruiz Jiménez

THE involvement of a group of boys in the daily rituals of the cathedral of Seville goes back to the restoration of its diocese, whose cathedral was dedicated on 11 March 1252.<sup>1</sup> My aim in this essay is to synthesize the various ways in which this important and indispensable group formed part of the daily life of the cathedral and to incorporate a new perspective based on recent studies of the archival sources.<sup>2</sup> The statutes promulgated on 29 May 1261 by Archbishop Remondo and his chapter already provide evidence for the existence of such a group in the designation *alumni cori*, who along with the *clerici cori* were under the jurisdiction of the cantor and the supervision of his vicar or succentor, who assisted him in his duties.<sup>3</sup> The financial support for the maintenance of the choirboys derived from the income willed to the cathedral by King Fernando III,

<sup>1</sup> All studies on the role of boys in the liturgical life of the Church of Seville are, like this one, indebted to Simón de la Rosa y López, *Los seises de la catedral de Sevilla: ensayo de investigación histórica* (Seville, 1904, rep. Seville, 1982). Herminio González Barrionuevo, *Los seises de Sevilla* (Seville, 1992), is not of central importance for the period that is the focus of the present essay. The most recent publication pertaining directly to the *seises* in this period focuses on a specific aspect of their participation in the feast of Corpus Christi in the context of recent studies on the early modern body; see Todd M. Borgerding, "Imagining the Sacred Body: Choirboys, Their Voices, and Corpus Christi in Early Modern Seville," in *Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth*, ed. Susan Boynton and Roe-Min Kok (Middletown, Ct., 2006), 25–48.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusion, references here to the acts of the cathedral chapter of Seville will not be taken from those published in Robert Murrell Stevenson, *La música en la catedral de Sevilla (1478–1606): Documentos para su estudio* (Madrid, 1985), because they are incomplete, sometimes contain errors, and do not correspond to the present numbering of the volumes in the cathedral archive.

<sup>3</sup> These Constitutions follow in the wake of others emanating from various Castilian-Leonese chapters, the model being the Constitutions of the cathedral of León, given by Honorius III on 25 May 1223. See Enrique Costa y Belda, "Las constituciones de Don Raimundo de Losaña para el cabildo de Sevilla (1261)," *Historia, instituciones, documentos 5* (1978), 169–235 at 195, 201–2, 223.

conqueror of the city, and by his son Alfonso x, who left income proceeding from the tithes of his *almojarifazgo* (1252).<sup>1</sup>

It has not been possible to determine the origin of the position of the *magister puerorum* in the cathedral of Seville. The office existed as a salaried post by at least the beginning of the fifteenth century and is documented as being held in 1419 by Alfonso Sánchez, the cathedral's first known choirmaster. The definitive impetus for establishing a master of the choirboys would come from Pope Eugenius IV in the course of the reforms he promoted during the 1430s. In these years, the diocese of Seville obtained the promulgation of the bulls *Ad exequendum* of Eugenius IV (1439) and *Votis illis* of Nicholas V (1454).

Various conclusions may be drawn from the bull of Eugenius IV. This document was granted at the request of the dean of the cathedral chapter and does not appear to establish anything new regarding the functions carried out by the choirboys or their master. The person who received the prebend had to be skilled in grammar and chant ("in gramatica et canto perito") and would be selected by the chapter. The stipend would not be paid in perpetuity; rather, the master could be relieved of the office and replaced by someone else at the discretion of the chapter. The number of boys was fixed at six (hence the designation *seises*). The master was supposed to direct and teach them and look after their health and nourishment ("dirigeret, instrueret, reficeret et nutrirer"); they were likewise to be selected by the chapter. The text emphasizes the requirements for the master's academic preparation, his behavior, and his participation in the stipulated daily liturgical obligations, all of which would contribute to the splendor of ceremonial in the cathedral. The *ración* would be Prebend 20, the income from which would be divided in half between the salary of the master and the maintenance and education of the boys.

The difficulty of finding a person competent in both grammar and chant obliged the chapter to ask the pope if it could choose a master who was accomplished in chant but not in grammar, in light of the priorities and needs of the cathedral and the fact that instruction in language was already covered by someone else (as we shall see). This request was granted by the abovementioned bull of Nicholas V (1454).<sup>2</sup>

The bull of Eugenius IV makes it clear that the sustenance of the choirboys depended on the *magister puerorum*. At least since the establishment of this benefice, the person who held it was responsible for the boys' education and care and was also supposed to lodge and feed them in his own home. When someone other than the holder of the prebend temporarily took charge of the choirboys for some reason, he automatically received the income from the prebend and was to be called the *magister puerorum*.<sup>3</sup> In the course of the fifteenth century,

<sup>1</sup> Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 30–31. The *almojarifazgo* was the tax paid for goods or merchandise exported from the kingdom, for items imported into the kingdom, or for goods traded from one port to another within Spain.

<sup>2</sup> These bulls are translated by Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 65–70. The originals, along with that of Julius III (cited below) are found in the Archivo de la catedral de Sevilla (hereafter A.C.S.), sección IX, leg. 125, piezas 15–17.

<sup>3</sup> I believe that occasional ambiguous expressions confirm this fact. In 1464, the

most beneficiaries of this *ración* held it only temporarily, continuing to serve the cathedral of Seville in other salaried or beneficed positions once they had finished performing the functions of the office.<sup>1</sup>

In the first half of the fifteenth century, the number of choirboys rose from five in 1414 (the earliest date at which their precise number was fixed) to seven in the 1430s and to eight in 1440, an increase that probably reflects the gradual specialization discussed below. Their number reached an exceptional maximum of twelve in the first years of the sixteenth century, although it usually remained between eight and ten.<sup>2</sup>

As the members of the cathedral choir multiplied and became specialized, the original nucleus of choirboys split into two groups. One consisted of those designated from the end of the fifteenth century by some variant on the diminutive of *cantor* (*cantorcito* or *cantorcillo*); they were under the choirmaster's jurisdiction. The other group, supervised by the boys' master of plainchant, continued to be called *mozos de coro*. Beginning in the 1570s, the first of these groups was distinguished by the characteristic Castilian term *seise*, which clearly alludes to the number of choirboys mentioned in the bull of Eugenius IV. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the terminology remained quite ambiguous, with the expression *mozo de coro* used generically for both groups, while the terms *maestro de los mozos* and *maestro de capilla* appear occasionally as synonyms.<sup>3</sup> Although

statement that Mateo Ximénez "took charge of the choirboys" could indicate that they already lived with him. The following statement from 1499 is clearer: "The Lord Schoolmaster called Francisco de la Torre was in charge of the choirboys, as your worship knew, for which they gave him a stipend in this Church" ("El señor Maestrescuela dijo Francisco de la Torre cómo tenía los mozos, como sabían sus mercedes, de lo cual le daban una ración en esta Iglesia") [in the margin:] "Magister puerorum"; A.C.S., sección I, libro 5, fol. 65<sup>v</sup> (1499); sección II, libro 249 (1464).

<sup>1</sup> This was the case for Alfonso Sánchez (1419–41), Esteban Alfonso (1444–58), Nicola Brachio de Fierro (1464–81), and Mateo Ximénez (1444–79†), who were cantors and masters of the choirboys; and of Pedro Martínez de la Caridad (1420–58†), Pedro Sánchez de Santo Domingo (1474–1502†), and Francisco de la Torre (1464–1507†), who received both Prebend 20 (corresponding to the *magister puerorum*) and another *ración* unrelated to this position throughout the time they served the cathedral; see Ruiz Jiménez, "Los sonidos de la montaña hueca: Innovación y tradición en las capillas musicales eclesíásticas de la corona de Castilla durante los albores del Renacimiento; el paradigma sevillano," in *La música en tiempos de Isabel la Católica*, ed. Soterraña Aguirre Rincón (Valladolid, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> In 1414, each received a weekly salary of 12 *maravedís*; A.C.S., sección II, libro 1075; sección IV, libros 20 (1505), 21 (1506), 22 (1507), 30 (1513), 33 (1514), 35 (1516).

<sup>3</sup> The evidence suggests that this process was already defined by 1467. In this year, one of the votive endowments received by the chapter (on which see more below) refers to "the succentor with the boys, whom he shows, and the teacher of the boys with his singing students" ("el sochantre con los mozos que el muestra, e el maestro de los mozos con sus discípulos cantores"). In 1474, orders of payment (*libramientos*) for Nicola Brachio de Fierro referred to him as the master of the "singing" boys. In the capitular agreement of 5 January 1478, in which Pedro Sánchez de Santo Domingo was named as a replacement for Nicola Brachio de Fierro as master of the choirboys, the word "coro" was altered to read "canto de órgano" (polyphony). These are all clear indications of the existence of a possible specialization of the child singers already by this time. A.C.S., sección I, libro I, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>. Alonso Pérez

already consolidated many years before, this process of separation culminated in 1532 when the choirboys (not the *seises*) entered the shortlived Colegio del Cardenal, founded a few years earlier by Cardinal Alonso Manrique to house youths preparing for an ecclesiastical career. Its regulations state that the choirboys should wear

purple clothing, not red, because they should be distinguished from the other six, and not grey, because they should also be distinguished from the students, and that these twenty boys should be called the choir collegians, and so that they do not displease the cantor or succentor, we request that these [officials] name the said boys and inform the rector, and that the master come there to teach them and give lessons to the College, and that in the church he punish and correct those who belong to the College in everything pertaining to the divine service.<sup>1</sup>

Another distinguishing element was the fact that the *seises* did not enter the Colegio del Cardenal; instead, they continued to live with the choirmaster or whoever was responsible for their instruction, until 1 January 1636, when they joined the Colegio de San Isidoro (founded in the capitular residences of the Estudio de San Miguel), where they lived with the *mozos de coro*.<sup>2</sup>

#### ACADEMIC TRAINING

DOCUMENTATION from as early as the fourteenth century sheds light on the Colegio or Estudio de Gramática de San Miguel, which was installed close to the cathedral. A grammar teacher (a cleric or priest whose salary was drawn from the budgets of both the cathedral chapter and the city council) and an assistant with a bachelor's degree were entrusted with teaching grammar to the residents of

de Alba, throughout his trajectory as *magister puerorum* in the cathedral of Seville, was designated interchangeably, albeit with a clear development, as master of the choirboys (1492), master of the singing boys (1496), and finally choirmaster (1503): A.C.S., sección 1, libro 1, fol. 2<sup>r</sup> (1478), libro 4, fol. 172<sup>v</sup> (1492), libro 6, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (1503); sección 11, libro 682 (1496), libro 719 (1503); libro 1077, fols. 168<sup>r</sup>, 175<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> “[r]opas moradas e no sean coloradas, porque haya diferencia de los otros seis, e no sean pardillas, porque también haya diferencia de los otros colegiales, e que estos veinte mozos se llamen los colegiales del coro, e porque no hagan agravio al chantre ni a su sochantre, queremos que ellos nombren los dichos mochachos e lo hagan saber al rector; y el maestro que suelen tener que los venga allí a enseñar e dar liciones al Colegio e que a quien pertenesce los castigue e corrija en la Iglesia en todo lo que conviene al culto divino.” Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 43.

<sup>2</sup> An account of the legislation and changes that took place in the government and teaching of the *seises* upon entering this institution lies outside the chronological limits of the present study. The most important archival source for this subject is the *Libro de la Fundación del Colegio de San Isidro de la Sancta Iglesia de Sevilla y de la entrada y salida de los colegiales y seises. Dispuesto por el Doctor Pedro del Bosque, su primer rector* (A.C.S., sección v, libro 362). See also Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 145–48; González Barrionuevo, *Los seises de Sevilla*, 16, 78–94.

the city.<sup>1</sup> Among the students who attended this institution were the choirboys, who were taught the reading and grammar skills essential to the comprehension and pronunciation of the texts they had to read and sing. One room in the school, called “la Galea,” was granted by the chapter to the boys so that they could stay there to study.<sup>2</sup>

The musical education of the boys developed and became more specialized in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, paralleling the development of the original group of choirboys. At first, throughout the fifteenth century, the *magister puerorum* or succentor (both usually also singers of polyphony in the cathedral choir) were responsible for teaching the boys, although the specific details of what they taught are not known. It remains difficult to determine whether these two officers taught the choirboys at the same time, from the outset. All indications suggest that they were teaching separately by the 1460s. The choirboys’ lessons with the succentor centered on plainchant, differing from the *cantorcicos*’ lessons with the *magister puerorum* (a position held in these years by Nicola Brachio de Fierro and Pedro Sánchez de Santo Domingo).<sup>3</sup> In the sixteenth century, the proliferation of archival sources makes it possible to confirm this situation. The official responsible for teaching the choirboys chant is called *maestro de canto llano*, a position that would become the *cátedra de melodía* in the seventeenth century. Teaching the *cantorcicos* was the responsibility of the *maestro de capilla*, a title that became established as a designation for this official, or for his assistant, who was also called the *maestro de facistol*, and who would occupy the position known as the *cátedra de canto de órgano* towards the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are no concrete references to the type of musical instruction the choirboys received from their teachers in the fifteenth century, their responsibilities and performances in the cathedral suggest that their musical education was not significantly different in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Already in 1408 there is an allusion to the fact that the boys were taught in a chapel of the cathedral, possibly that of San Clemente where the cibary was located,<sup>5</sup> probably continuing until work began on the construction of the new

<sup>1</sup> José Sánchez Herrero, “Centros de enseñanza y estudiantes de Sevilla durante los siglos XIII al XV,” *En la España medieval* 5 (1984), 875–98 at 878–82.

<sup>2</sup> A.C.S. Sección I, libro 4, fol. 139<sup>v</sup> (1488); sección IV, libro 18, fol. 22<sup>v</sup> (1499), libro 29, fol. 4<sup>r</sup> (1512).

<sup>3</sup> Between at least 1408 and 1459, the succentor, *magister puerorum*, a cantor, or some undesignated person who “teaches the boys of the cathedral choir” (“enseña a los mozos de la capilla”) received an annual salary of 900 *maravedis*. In the 1470s, the succentor’s salary for his teaching had increased to 3,000 *maravedis*. A.C.S., sección II, libros 1074, 1075, 1079.

<sup>4</sup> Herminio González Barrionuevo, *Francisco Guerrero (1528–1599): Vida y obra; La música en la catedral de Sevilla a finales del siglo XVI* (Seville, 2000), 133, 170, 175–77.

<sup>5</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1075, fols. 2<sup>r</sup>, 199<sup>r</sup>. The Librería Capitular was situated in this space at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when one of its sacristans (at least between 1401 and 1410) was Fernando Estevan, “teacher of plainchant, counterpoint, and polyphony” (“maestro de canto llano, e de contrapunto e de canto de órgano”), whose musical treatise written in Castilian in 1410 may represent his teaching in this period. See

Gothic church, when the choirboys and their teacher must have moved to a space in the new location of the cibary (tabernacle), which had been moved from the center of the Mudejar cathedral to the chapels situated in the back of the Nave del Lagarto in the Patio de los Naranjos. Beginning in 1533, musical instruction (like the singers' and *ministriles'* rehearsals with the choirmaster) took place in the Capilla de la Granada, situated in the Nave de los Caballeros, in one of the wings of the Patio de los Naranjos, the modern-day location of the Iglesia del Sagrario.<sup>1</sup> The choirmaster at the time, Pedro Fernández de Castilleja, had to teach two lessons of *canto de órgano* (polyphony). A few years later, in 1540, it was specified that these were to be lessons of *canto llano* (plainchant), *canto de órgano* (polyphony), and *contrapunto* (counterpoint).<sup>2</sup>

In 1551, the cathedral of Seville hired Francisco Guerrero as assistant to Pedro Fernández de Castilleja. At this time the assistant's duties were formulated in detail, including those related to the boy singers. First, he would have to teach them to read, write, and sing the responses, verses, antiphons, lessons, and the martyrology; the remainder of the assistant's duties pertained to service in the cathedral choir. Second, he would have to teach them to sing plainchant, polyphony, counterpoint, "the same for plainchant as well as for polyphony" ("así sobre canto llano como sobre canto de órgano"), and composition, so they would become capable musicians and composers. Third, he would have to see to their lodging, meals, and clothing until they were dismissed or their voices changed. The chapter specified that they would not be used for performances except for those in the cathedral, or for any performances that were not strictly musical. The assistant also had to make sure there were boys in sufficient number for the needs of the liturgy. The chapter checked each month to ensure strict observance of these orders. The compensation offered to Guerrero maintained the salary he had received as a contralto singer and gave him half the income of the choirmaster's *ración*, guaranteeing him this position at the death of Pedro Fernández de Castilleja. All this, at the request of the dean, the chapter, and Guerrero himself, was ratified by the bull *Pastoralis officii*, issued by Julius III on 1 June 1554. On 6 February 1555, the chapter raised Guerrero's salary by 20,000 *maravedis* and granted him a house large enough to live in with the *seises*, along with the express permission to maintain a school there and to give private lessons for as long as he did not receive the full salary of the choirmaster.<sup>3</sup>

At the end of the chronological period that concerns us here, the chapter compiled two detailed statutes of 1597 and 1598 listing all the agreements that traditionally had been drawn up regarding the choirboys and the *seises* along with their respective teachers. The first statute describes their training in plainchant and lists

Juan Ruiz Jiménez, *La Librería de Canto de Órgano: Creación y pervivencia del repertorio del Renacimiento en la actividad musical de la catedral de Sevilla* (Granada, 2007), 8.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the history of the cathedral, despite changing times and locations, these two spaces continued as the sites for instruction and the choir rehearsals.

<sup>2</sup> A.C.S., sección 1, libro 13, fols. 272<sup>r</sup>, 279<sup>r</sup>; libro 17, fol. 19<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> For the text of the agreements and a translation of the bull, see Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 81–96.

their various functions, both musical and liturgical. The regulations for the *seises* describe the care of their clothing, their nourishment, and their lodging, and the financial resources that the master had to dedicate to them. He had to attend not only to their musical education (which took place in the cathedral for one hour in the morning and another in the afternoon), but also to their behavior, controlling their trips outside. The *seises* owed him absolute respect and obedience, but if any of them felt aggrieved, he could turn to the dean who, after listening, would see that justice was done.<sup>1</sup>

The substance of the boys' instruction in plainchant can be deduced from treatises by two choirmasters of Seville Cathedral: the *Arte de canto llano* of Juan Martínez (Alcalá de Henares, 1532) and the *Breve instrucción de canto llano para aprender brevemente el artificio del canto* of Luis de Villafranca (Seville, 1565). For the musical education of the *seises* the teacher needed, among other materials, books of polyphony and plainchant that were duplicates or that could not be used in the choir for some reason, as well as some volumes from the rich collection of music theory treatises and printed books that came to the cathedral from the Biblioteca Colombina.<sup>2</sup>

#### PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

THE participation of the choirboys in a private ceremony is documented for the first time in 1311, indicating that they were involved early on in various rituals resulting from individual donations. In this particular case they had to participate along with the clerks of the *veintena* (*clerici cori* or *clerici vicenarii*) in the performance of the canticles of Matins and the litany at the grave of the deceased woman who made the donation.<sup>3</sup> As we will see, these votive endowments constituted an important source of external revenue for the maintenance and academic training of the choirboys, besides giving a significant boost to the cathedral's musical activities both inside and outside the choir. Thanks to the proliferation of such donations, the chapter decided in 1363 on a sum of 300 *maravedís* for those who wished to establish in perpetuity a solemn celebration of their anniversary in the cathedral, with a vigil at the tomb and a Requiem Mass the following day. The money was to be divided among those participants who remained until the choirboys said *Requiescat in pace*.<sup>4</sup>

The *Regla Antigua de Coro*, compiled in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and preserved in a parchment copy completed in 1551, describes the frequent participation of the choirboys, called *pueri*, in the liturgical activities

<sup>1</sup> For the transcription of these Statutes, see Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 56–57; González Barrionuevo, *Los seises de Sevilla*, 293–96.

<sup>2</sup> Ruiz Jiménez, *La Librería de Canto de Órgano*, 13, 17, 220, 306–7.

<sup>3</sup> A.C.S., sección IX, leg. 58, pieza 34. The clerks of the *veintena*, or *veinteneros*, specialized in liturgical chant and, at least since the beginning of the fifteenth century, appear frequently as singers of both plainchant and polyphony.

<sup>4</sup> A.C.S., sección I, libro 370, fol. 10<sup>v</sup>.

of Seville cathedral.<sup>1</sup> This document offers precise details regarding the specific chants, the number of boys who had to sing them (ranging from one to six), and where they were to sing. These prescriptions vary considerably according to the rank of the feast being celebrated, highlighting the extent and particular significance of their participation in liturgical actions of both the Office and the Mass. The *Regla Antigua* also describes the participation of the choirboys in the numerous processions inside and outside the church in which they carried candles, censers, crosses, and other liturgical objects. This continued activity meant that they spent most of their time in the cathedral. The chapter had a room with beds on its premises so that the boys appointed to sing Matins could rest.<sup>2</sup> The boys' ordinary duties, determined by the succentor, followed a weekly rotation for which he prepared the choir list designating the two boys in charge, the two with candles who sang the responsories and verses of the choir, and a fifth who had several duties: reading the daily martyrology entry, ensuring that all the books were returned to their cupboards, and keeping the lectern in the center of the choir lit.<sup>3</sup>

From the choirboys' role in the liturgy emerged a repertory that was occasionally copied in books intended specifically for them. The earliest evidence for such books is a reference from 1434 to a binding in boards and silver repoussé of a book for the choirboys that only a few months later would be stolen from its place in the choir. In 1454, there is another reference to the binding of a book of the "five histories" (*çincostodias*) "from which the boys read in the chapel" ("en que leen los mozos en la capilla"), probably used for teaching.<sup>4</sup> In 1485, the prebendary Gonzalo Sánchez had to provide the choirboys with a psalter and a volume containing the "five histories."<sup>5</sup> The Biblioteca Capitulare preserves some of the books intended for the choirboys, among them a volume copied in the fifteenth century entitled *Versiculos puerorum*, which includes several melodies for versicles, antiphons, hymns (*Gloria laus* and *Vexilla regis*), and other chants (see Figure 5.1).<sup>6</sup> In 1555, Francisco Guerrero was paid for the binding of a book of responses and verses for the *cantorricos*.<sup>7</sup>

The participation of the choirboys with adult singers in the performance of

<sup>1</sup> A.C.S., sección III, libro 1.

<sup>2</sup> A.C.S., sección I, libro 1, fol. 14<sup>r</sup> (1478); libro 3, fol. 54<sup>v</sup> (1481), libro 6, fol. 51<sup>v</sup> (1503).

<sup>3</sup> These functions appear together in the chapter heading for the office of cantor in the *Libro Blanco* of the cathedral, copied in 1411, which reflects the traditional functions of the boys throughout the fourteenth century. A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, fol. 69<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> This term, which is repeated to refer to various volumes produced within the cathedral precinct and outside it, alludes to a *Commune sanctorum*. The prologue of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros to the *Commune sanctorum* (Alcalá de Henares, ca. 1516) states: "We have administered the publication of the Commune sanctorum, which others call the five histories" ("curavimus imprimendum Commune sanctorum quod alii quinque historias appellant"); quoted in Julián Martín Abad, *Post-incunables ibéricos* (Madrid, 2001), 202. This is also confirmed by Juan Bermudo in his *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* (Osuna, 1555) fol. 124<sup>v</sup>: "Los communes, que otros dizen cinco historias."

<sup>5</sup> A.C.S., sección I, libro 3, fol. 29<sup>v</sup> (1485); sección IV, libro 2B, fols. 9<sup>r</sup>, 46<sup>v</sup> (1434), libro 7, fol. 16<sup>r</sup> (1454).

<sup>6</sup> Biblioteca Capitulare y Colombina (hereafter B.C.C.), MS 59-4-15.

<sup>7</sup> A.C.S., sección VI, leg. 11354.

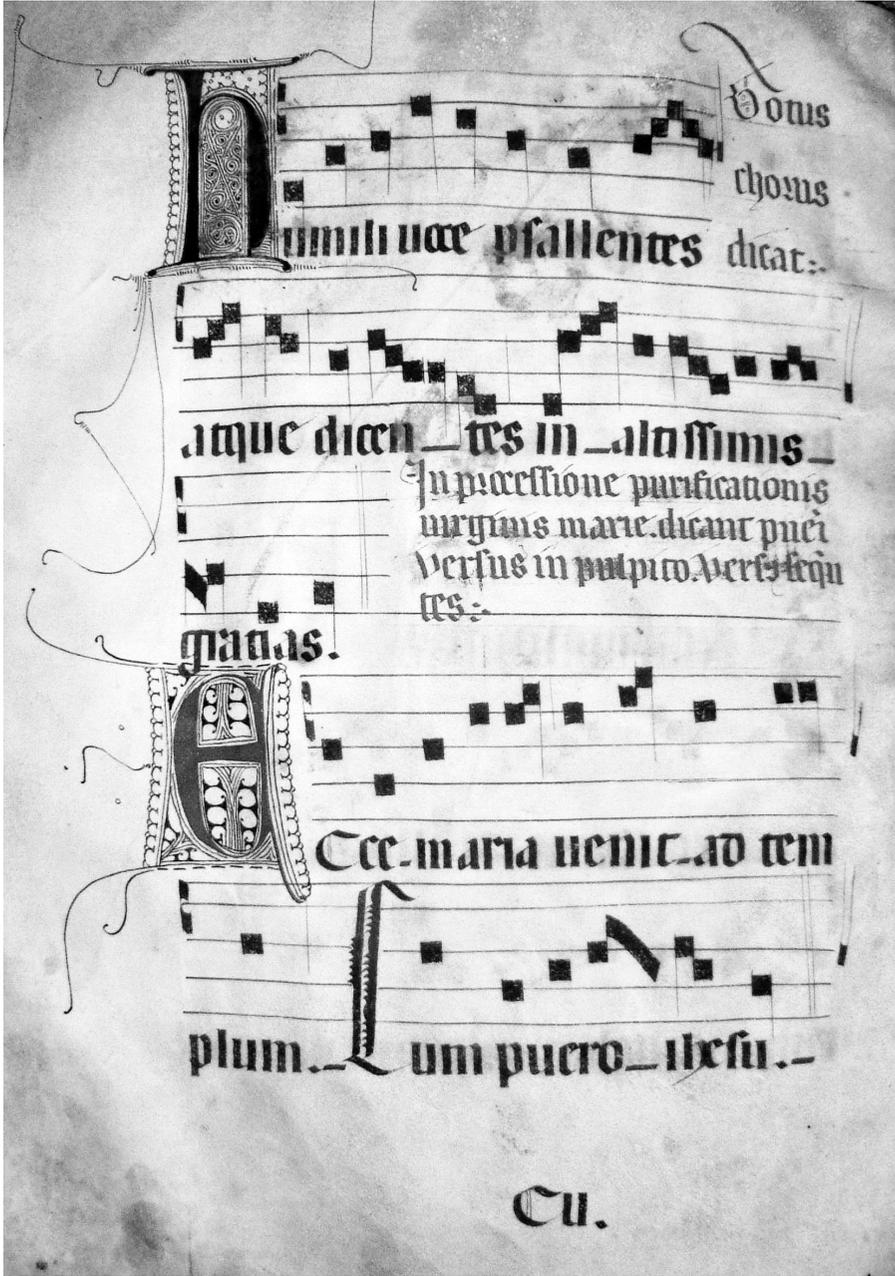


Figure 5.1: Seville, Institución Colombina, MS 59-4-15, s.f.

polyphony is documented as an established practice from the beginning of the fifteenth century. It must have taken root in the previous century, but the absence of certain types of documents before this date precludes further specificity for the moment.

In 1419, the master of the choirboys, Alfonso Sánchez, with five singers and the five choirboys, sang the *chanzonetas* (villancicos) of Christmas Matins, for which each received extra remuneration. A few years later, in 1440, the choirboys' participation in the Corpus Christi procession is also documented. Brought by the tenor singer Íñigo Sánchez, they sang *canto de órgano* in front of the platforms on which the monstrance was carried, perhaps along with the other seven singers who were paid for the same reason.<sup>1</sup>

From the middle of the fifteenth century, private donations that included the choirboys in devotional or liturgical performances (whether as an independent group or along with other singers) increased in both number and size. With the construction of the new Gothic church, new ritual spaces emerged to accommodate the diversification of musical practices, which in turn affected the growth of ensembles necessary for performance and the need for new musical repertory, both local and imported.

In 1450, a canon of Seville Cathedral, Ruy González Bolante, founded the chapel of St. Francis, one of the first Gothic spaces to be built, for his burial in the cathedral. Among other things, he endowed four Masses to be said in the morning, so as not to interfere with the liturgy of the hours. Three of these Masses were to be celebrated in the chapel of St. Francis; the fourth would take place at the altar of Santa María de la Antigua, which at this time was situated in the chapel of St. Clement. One of the chaplains from the chapel of St. Clement would officiate at these Masses, and the master of the choirboys would sing with the six boys and two other singers from the cathedral choir. Each Mass was endowed with 120 *maravedís*, which would be divided among the participants.<sup>2</sup>

A short while later, in 1456, Pedro Martínez de la Caridad, who was the first designated for the prebend of *magister puerorum*, established a foundation that expressly required the presence of the choirboys. He wished to be buried in front of the altar of the Virgen de la Antigua, and in this place he established a ritual to be celebrated every Saturday, when the succentor, accompanied by the choirboys, would sing the antiphon *Salve regina* "solemnly" ("solemnemente"). Afterwards, two of the boys would sing *Ergo pro nobis ora dei genitrix pia*, followed by a prayer, and then all would sing a response "solemnly" and pronounce the appropriate prayer over the tomb of Pedro Martínez.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to determine whether both the antiphon and the response would be sung polyphonically. It is likely that they were, because the choirboys would sing the superius and altus parts, while the succentor, who at the time of the foundation was Miguel Rodríguez (and who was usually also a singer in the cathedral choir), would perform the lower part, creating

<sup>1</sup> Ruiz Jiménez, "Los sonidos de la montaña hueca."

<sup>2</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotación n° 79.

<sup>3</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotación n° 92.

a sufficiently versatile ensemble for singing the repertory already well established in Seville Cathedral around the middle of the sixteenth century (see below).

Particularly significant for our knowledge of the repertory for the dead is the donation of Gonzalo Sánchez de Córdoba, archdeacon of Jerez and canon of Seville Cathedral. On 25 September 1467, the chapter agreed on the manner in which the anniversary of this important canon would be celebrated. Sánchez de Córdoba was interred in the chapel of St. James. The Vigil would be celebrated in the choir with an invitatory and two high-ranking clerics wearing copes. The Requiem Mass on the following day, 17 July, would take place in the chapel where the canon was buried and would be attended by the chapter and all the beneficed clergy. The foundation makes special reference to the participation of the clerks of the *veintena* in the responses of both the Vigil and of the Mass:

The succentor, with the boys he teaches and the master of the boys with his singing pupils, are to take part in the responses of the Vigil and the Mass of this anniversary, and then the succentor and the master of the boys, on the following day, must say his Requiem Mass, and either one of them may celebrate, and the boys officiate, and for this they are to be paid 100 *maravedís*.<sup>1</sup>

Everything seems to indicate the polyphonic performance of the responsories of the dead, *Libera me domine* and *Ne recorderis*, which opened and closed these ceremonies, probably along with some element of the Requiem Mass — all at about the time that the lost Requiem of Dufay (the earliest known example of the genre) is thought to have been composed.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the donation of the canon Hernán Gómez de Solís (recorded in his will dated 29 August 1526) leaves no room for doubt. The foundation stipulates that Vespers of the Dead should be sung at his tomb: “one polyphonic response and on the next day a polyphonic mass with its response” (“un responso de canto de órgano y otro día una misa de canto de órgano con su responso”). At this Mass, the succentor would officiate and the choirmaster would sing with his choirboys and other singers of the cathedral selected by him to receive the payment stipulated by the foundation.<sup>3</sup>

Around 1480, the cathedral canon Pedro Díaz de Toledo began to fund the *Salve* service that was performed every Saturday afternoon in the chapel of the Antigua. To guarantee its continuation, in 1499, when he was already bishop of Málaga, he established a special foundation that explicitly dictated the payment of four *maravedís* to each of the six boy sopranos (*tiples*) who would take part in the performance of the various polyphonic pieces in this ceremony.<sup>4</sup> This endowment

<sup>1</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotación n° 202: “el sochantre con los mozos que el muestra, e el maestro de los mozos con sus discípulos cantores han de estar a los resposos de la vigilia e misa del dicho aniversario, e después el dicho sochantre e el maestro de los mozos, otro día siguiente, han de decir su misa de réquiem e celebrar cualquiera de ellos e los mozos oficiarán, e estos han de haber ciento maravedís luego pagados.”

<sup>2</sup> On the composition of the choir in these years and the liturgy and repertory of these anniversaries, see Ruiz Jiménez, *La Librería de Canto de Órgano*, 278–84.

<sup>3</sup> A.C.S., sección IX, leg. 70, pieza 1.

<sup>4</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotación n° 392.

became the model for others that would be founded later on in the same place and in the cathedral's other ritual spaces. At least three books of polyphony can be linked to this devotional foundation in the period under consideration here. Two of them (now lost) contained motets, settings of the *Salve regina*, masses, "and other things" ("e otras cosas") — and were already in the chapel in 1517; the third, copied in 1553, is still extant and contains a repertory both native and foreign for the celebration of this ceremony.<sup>1</sup> One *Salve regina* by Guerrero (Figure 5.2) and his motet *Virgo prudentissima* for four voices are scored for SSSA. The same manuscript contains another *Salve regina* by Guerrero and a considerable number of motets by various composers, scored for SSAT.<sup>2</sup>

In 1498, Pedro Mejía, archdeacon of Écija and canon of Seville, endowed the singing of the antiphon *Sanctissimae trinitatis* by the choirboys.<sup>3</sup> The donation was supplemented in 1549 by the canon Diego Vázquez Alderete.<sup>4</sup> This practice continued in the choir of Seville Cathedral, after Prime and before Vespers, until the closing of the Colegio de San Isidoro in 1960. The melody appears at the end of the *Arte de canto llano* of Juan Martínez, whom the chapter named master of plainchant for the choirboys in 1525.<sup>5</sup> Comparable donations, albeit with slightly different ritual prescriptions, include funerary responses endowed in 1503 by the canon Diego Alfonso de Sevilla and in 1505 by the cathedral organist Bernal de Cuenca — in both cases the antiphon *Gaude Dei genitrix*, which was to be sung by the choirboys with their master: the first in front of the altar of Our Lady of the Pomegranate and the second in front of the altar of Our Lady of the Remedies, situated behind the choir (*trascoro*).<sup>6</sup>

In 1502, the cathedral cantor Juan de Vergara endowed the Matins services of Easter and, after the office, a procession to the chapel of the Virgen de la Antigua with the monstrance over a chalice. These festal Matins entailed the participation of the singers, choirboys, and the organist. At the beginning of the procession, the cathedral choir sang the antiphon *Crucifixus surrexit a mortuis*; upon reaching the door of the chapel, they began to sing the antiphon *Regina celi letare*. At the conclusion of the antiphon, the boys sang the verse *Surrexit Dominus de sepulcro*. In the chapel, the priest said the prayer *Mater Dei rogamus te*, after which they returned to the choir, accompanied by the singing of the *Regina celi*. After the host was placed on the altar, shown to the people, and deposited in the monstrance, the priest would say the prayer *Concede nos famulos tuos*, and the boys would finish the

<sup>1</sup> Ruiz Jiménez, *La Librería de Canto de Órgano*, 38–40.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, III.

<sup>3</sup> This donation was reinforced at the beginning of the sixteenth century when another one was established by the agent of the lonja Pedro Ortiz, who left 1,000 *maravedís* a year for the choirboys to sing this antiphon after Prime and None. A.C.S., sección II, libro 1517.

<sup>4</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotación n° 453.

<sup>5</sup> The melody is recorded by Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 40–42; González Barrionuevo, *Los seises de Sevilla*, 45; A.C.S., sección IV, libro 8, fol. 6<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotaciones n° 355 and n° 384.

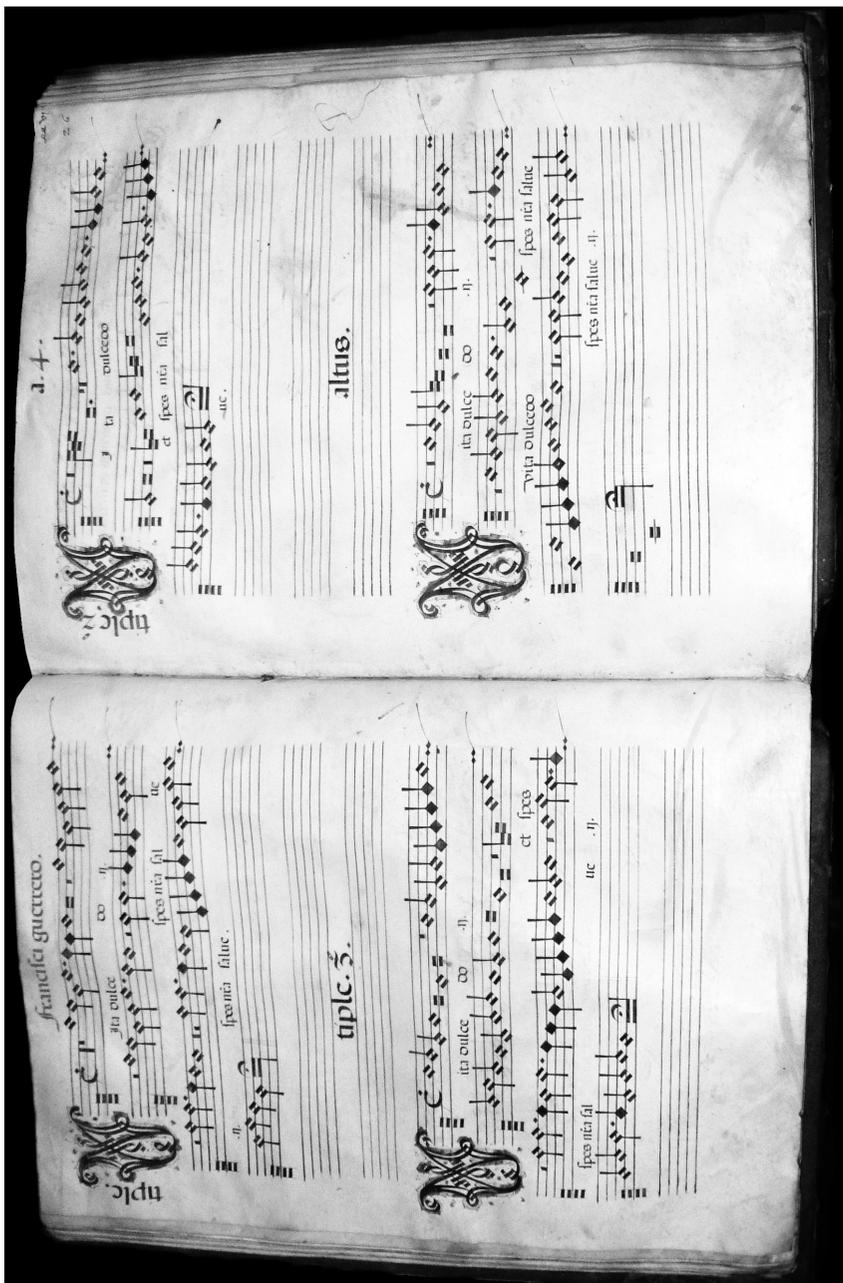


Figure 5.2: Seville, Institución Colombina, Libro de Polifonía no. 1, fols. 25<sup>v</sup>–26<sup>r</sup>.

ceremony by singing the *Benedicamus Domino* with a reprise of the Alleluia. The choirboys were paid 50 *maravedís* from the total donation of 5250 *maravedís*.<sup>1</sup>

The last donation I will mention here reflects the participation of the choirboys in the polyphonic performance of votive Masses, which confirms the diversification of the repertory they sang as well as the process by which they became divided into the two groups described earlier. Around 1514, the canon Luis Ordóñez began to fund a Mass of the Sacrament celebrated in the cibary of the cathedral on the first Thursday of each month at the same time and in a manner comparable to the one sung polyphonically in the chapel of the Virgen de la Antigua on Saturday afternoons. In 1518, Ordóñez endowed his donation in perpetuity, simultaneously founding two monthly Masses, also dedicated to the Sacrament and celebrated in the cibary, which would be said on Fridays by the master of the choirboys, accompanied by the choirboys. The chapter ordered "that the choirmaster and the master of the choirboys, each with his boys, should celebrate these offices," and according to the foundation, they would be paid the amount stipulated for this service.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the work performed by the boy singers in the choir and in other ceremonial spaces of the cathedral, they acquired a prominent role in the diverse dramatic performances that took place over the course of the liturgical year. I have not been able to document conclusively the participation of a costumed choirboy in the song of the Sibyl during Matins on the feast of the Nativity. On the contrary, as already stated, beginning in the early fifteenth century the choirboys sang in the *chanzonetas* during Christmas services, and from the end of the century it is clear that they played a very active role singing and dancing in the performances of the *Officium pastorum*. By the middle of the sixteenth century, these performances had gradually been transformed into theatrical productions that were very popular with the citizenry.<sup>3</sup>

There is also no doubt about the role played by the choirboys, dressed as the Marys, during the representation of the *Visitatio sepulchri*, or the sequence of the Mass, *Victimae paschali laudes*, on Easter Sunday. The first references date from 1434, when the carpenter Bartolomé Sánchez was paid to build the floor of the tomb and the scaffolding for the image of Mary, where it had to be located so as to be more easily seen. Payments for gloves, ribbons, the Crown of Thorns, and a person especially enlisted to make up and dress the choirboy for his participation in this performance, all appear sporadically in the chapter records.<sup>4</sup> In 1504 and 1505, we know that the figures of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and six apostles appeared in this representation; in 1506, the scene was completed

<sup>1</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1477, dotación nº 409.

<sup>2</sup> A.C.S., sección I, libro 10, fol. 196<sup>r</sup> (1518): "al maestro de capilla e al maestro de los mozos de coro que cada uno de ellos, con sus mozos, hagan estos dichos oficios."

<sup>3</sup> Jean Sentaurens, *Seville et le théâtre: De la fin du Moyen Âge à la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Lille, 1984), 21–23.

<sup>4</sup> A.C.S., sección IV, libro 2B, fols. 3<sup>v</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup> (1434); libro 8, fol. 14<sup>r</sup> (1458), libro 10, fol. 23<sup>r</sup> (1464); libro 18, fol. 27<sup>v</sup> (1498); libro 19, fol. 52<sup>r</sup> (1504); libro 20, fol. 58<sup>v</sup> (1505); libro 21, fol. 57<sup>r</sup> (1506).

with the three Marys. The female characters must have been played by choirboys, as was the custom.

A theatrical performance of particular importance in Seville Cathedral was that which took place on the feast of Pentecost beginning in the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Even absent an analysis of all its components, it is clear that it became ever more complex as the sixteenth century approached. Many of its elements are common to representations associated with several ecclesiastical institutions in the Crown of Aragón.<sup>2</sup> The most familiar elements to scholars include the temporary structure called a “castle” (*castillo*) that was placed in the chancel, a wheel representing heaven to which eight seraphs and other ornamental elements were attached, and mechanical doves, all accompanied by fireworks, the release of a white dove, hundreds of turtledoves, wafers, sunbeams, etc. In the most elaborate form of the spectacle, the characters were God the Father, the twelve apostles, and the Virgin Mary. Singers, *ministriles*, trumpets, drums, and tambourines participated in the performance; in 1506 and 1508, a payment is specified for the “six little singers who went up in the wheel” (“seis cantorcillos que anduvieron en la rueda, arriba”).<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to determine the beginnings of the Boy Bishop ceremony in Seville Cathedral. It is listed already in the *Regla Vieja* and documented by other sources beginning in 1414 in the oldest volume of payment registers preserved in the cathedral.<sup>4</sup> We know the details of the ceremony and how it was organized by Archbishop Diego de Deza in 1512, in thanksgiving for the fact that the dome of the cathedral harmed no one when it collapsed on 28 December 1511 — the feast of the Holy Innocents when the actions involving the Boy Bishop and his entourage traditionally took place. According to Ortiz de Zúñiga, the ceremony continued to be performed until 1563. Developed, transformed, and not exempt from various scandals, it survived in the *Colegio de Maese Rodrigo* (University of Seville) as a student festival until 1654 and in the cathedral until well into the eighteenth cen-

<sup>1</sup> In the *Regla Vieja de Coro* of Seville Cathedral, the writing of which (as stated above) must have begun in the fourteenth century, the Mass of Terce on the feast of Pentecost refers to what could have been the origin of the performances associated with this feast. The celebrant begins the first verse of the sequence *Veni sancte spiritus* “facing the choir, and throws a white dove from his hands, and after these verses are played on the organ, that first verse should be repeated by the choir, and afterwards by the organ, and finally the entire sequence is sung in alternation with the organ. While it is sung, turtledoves and fire and water and hosts are thrown” (“uersa facie ad chorum, et proiciat de manibus suis columbam albam et post istimet versus pulsatur in organis iste primus versus repetatur in choro et post in organis et post modum dicatur tota prosa in organis alternatim. Interim autem dum cantatur proiiciantur turtures et ignis et aqua et oblee”); A.C.S., sección III, fol. 144<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Francesc Massip i Bonet, “Cerimònia litúrgica i artifici teatral en el jorn de Pentecosta (segles XIII–XVI),” in *Actes del Congrés de la Seu Vella de Lleida* (Lleida, 1991), 257–63.

<sup>3</sup> A.C.S., sección I, libro 7, fol. 34<sup>r</sup> (1508); sección IV, libro 2B, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> (1434); libro 18, fols. 27<sup>v</sup>–28<sup>v</sup> (1498); libro 19 fol. 52<sup>r-v</sup> (1504); libro 20, fol. 59<sup>r-v</sup> (1505); libro 21, fols. 57<sup>v</sup>–58<sup>r</sup> (1506).

<sup>4</sup> A.C.S., sección II, libro 1075, fol. 10<sup>r</sup>; sección III, libro I, fol. 275<sup>r</sup>.

tury, when it involved a *seise* who acted as the choirmaster and other clerks who acted as master of ceremonies and succentor on the feast of the Innocents.<sup>1</sup>

At particular moments and for occasional ceremonies celebrated in the cathedral, the choirboys appeared costumed, usually as angels. Thus, at the funeral in 1545 of María Manuela of Portugal, the first consort of King Philip II, the boy singers, “like angels” (“como ángeles”) with wings and garlands on their heads, standing around the tomb, sang the response of the second lesson *Qui Lazarum* and the *Requiescat in pace*.<sup>2</sup> The “via triumphalis” designed for the wedding in 1526 of Emperor Charles V and Maria of Portugal terminated in a magnificent arch financed by the cathedral chapter and positioned above the cathedral’s Puerta del Perdón. At the center of this arch was a “heaven” from which the boy singers, some dressed as angels and others representing the Virtues, sang “with skilled and sweet harmony” (“con diestra y suave armonía”).<sup>3</sup>

I have reserved for the end of this essay my discussion of the participation of the choirboys in the procession of Corpus Christi (which in Seville assumed exceptional solemnity and splendor) because it is the best known aspect of their history.<sup>4</sup> In the complex civic-religious spectacle of this processional parade, the choirboys played various roles that changed and even on occasion were superimposed throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Their presence among the musical personnel participating in the procession is already recorded in the cathedral’s earliest preserved account books, which date from 1434, when eight choirboys were paid for singing in the procession along with the eighteen singers of the cathedral.<sup>5</sup> The number of choirboys and adult singers varied annually for practically the entire period considered in this study. In addition to their role within the cathedral choir, they appear from the middle of the fifteenth century in the “roca,” a kind of decorated float carried in the procession on the shoulders of a dozen men. On the “roca” the choirboys were costumed as Mary, St. Dominic, and St. Francis, or as singing angels. Along with this official structure, the procession included other *castillos* similar to the “roca” but sponsored by some of the city’s guilds. In these there also occasionally appeared boy singers whose origins are not specified.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 45–59.

<sup>2</sup> B.C.C., MS 59-1-3, fol. 151<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Sentaurens, *Seville et le théâtre*, 32.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the bibliography cited on the *seises*, various scholars, some of them art historians, have addressed this theme; see especially José Gestoso y Pérez, *Curiosidades Antiguas Sevillanas: Serie II* (Seville, 1910; repr. Seville, 1993); John Brande Trend, “The Dance of the Seises at Seville,” *Music & Letters* 2 (1921), 10–28; Vicente Lleó Cañal, *Arte y espectáculo: La fiesta del Corpus Christi en la Sevilla de los siglos XVI y XVII* (Seville, 1975); Lynn Matluck Brooks, “‘Los Seises’ in the Golden Age of Seville,” *Dance Chronicle* 5 (1982), 121–55; Sentaurens, *Seville et le théâtre*, 35–77, 155–68; María Jesús Serrano Sanz, “El Corpus en Sevilla a mediados del siglo XVI: Castillos y danzas,” *Laboratorio de Arte* 10 (1997), 123–38.

<sup>5</sup> A.C.S., sección IV, libro 2B, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> In 1514, in the entourage that accompanied them to the *castillo* subsidized by the guild of the tailors, knitters, and bodice-makers, there were two boy singers who were supposed

In the sixteenth century the structure of the “roca” was transformed into triumphant chariots — moving stages that allowed for the display of a greater number of characters with more complex staging. On these surfaces, veritable dramatic works such as the *autos sacramentales* could be performed, allowing the *seises* temporarily to become actors.<sup>1</sup> The last element of the *seises*’ participation in the Corpus Christi procession, the dance, is also the one whose origins and configuration throughout the sixteenth century is most controversial. The first explicit allusion occurs in 1508 in the cathedral fabric’s account books, which record the payment of 136 *maravedís* to the boy singers who “were singing and dancing in the procession.” The figure indicates that there were eight singers, since each usually received 17 *maravedís* (half a *real*). The reduced number (in comparison to the twelve singers in 1507) can be explained by the terrible epidemic of the plague that devastated the city that year and decimated the cathedral choir as much as the rest of the citizenry. Nothing in this reference suggests novelty except the specification of dancing, which is repeated in 1509, 1510, and 1512, when there were eleven choirboys. The records specify that they danced in front of the Custodia, but this is repeated only very sporadically until the practice became established in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Everything indicates that 1508 was not the first year in which the choirboys danced and that, at the beginning, they did not have to dance every year, nor did all those who participated in the procession take part in the dance. The dances must have had a prearranged choreography, which entailed the presence (mentioned occasionally) of a person charged with teaching it to the *seises*.<sup>3</sup> The high point of this tradition — the codification and the introduction of the *seises*’ dance in the cathedral during the celebration of the octave of Corpus Christi (in front of the high altar), the Immaculate Conception, and the three days of Shrovetide — came about through private donations of 1613, 1654, and 1679 that lie outside the chronological limits of this study.<sup>4</sup>

What happened to the choirboys after their voices changed? What were their prospects for professional advancement? For the fifteenth century, very little is known; the academic training they had received enabled them to continue in ecclesiastical careers and enter the regular or secular clergy as singers in the choir of Seville Cathedral or in one of the other ecclesiastical institutions of comparable

to sing the Magnificat. In the *castillo* of the carpenters’ guild in 1530, four singers were supposed to represent the office of the Nativity: Joseph, Mary, an angel, and a shepherd (plus a small child). The contract stipulates that the singers had to be the youngest available and that they had to rehearse their performance in advance. Sentaurens, *Seville et le théâtre*, 52, 54.

<sup>1</sup> In the performance of the *auto sacramental* *El triunfo de la Iglesia* (1560), there were six *cantorcicos* on stage, but their precise role in the dramatic action cannot be determined; Sentaurens, *Seville et le théâtre*, 165–67; Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 231–32; José Sánchez-Arjona, *Noticias referentes a los Anales del Teatro en Sevilla desde Lope de Rueda hasta fines del siglo XVII* (Seville, 1898; repr. Seville, 1994), 23.

<sup>2</sup> A.C.S., sección IV, libro 23, fol. 17<sup>r</sup>; libro 24, fol. 20<sup>v</sup>; libro 25, fol. 26<sup>r</sup>; libro 28, fol. 27<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Rosa y López, *Los seises*, 234, 236, 240–44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 248–52, 256–59.

or inferior rank. The situation became regularized and institutionalized thanks to two individual foundations established by two beneficed members of the cathedral clergy who were former *seises*. The first of these was established by the prothonotary and canon Diego de Ribera in his will of 10 December 1551. One of the clauses created two scholarships of six thousand *maravedís* a year for those boy singers whose voices had changed and who had served four years in the cathedral. The youths had to continue their studies in the Colegio de San Miguel and their residence in the choir. In order to receive the scholarship, they were examined each trimester to check on their performance. If their progress was inadequate, they would be paid their salaries and dismissed. The scholarships would last for four years. Only two years later, in 1553, another former *seise*, the dean Diego de Carmona, increased Canon Ribera's donation by four thousand *maravedís* for each of the two existing scholarships and established two more of equal size, lowering to three the prior years of service as *seise* that were required for the scholarship.<sup>1</sup> These donations propelled and enhanced the prestige of the group, and above all, favored its formation, promotion, and employment — the most famous example in the period under study here being the composer Alonso Lobo de Borja. The Colegio de San Isidoro and other foundations established in the seventeenth century improved their standards of living, and the chapter focused still more attention on this group of children essential to the musical development of Seville Cathedral.

[translated by Susan Boynton]

<sup>1</sup> For the details of these donations, see *ibid.*, 120–31.