

Gonçalo Annes Boto, organist and chapel master of the Church of Santa Cruz, Graciosa Island (Azores)

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Summary

In the first decades of the seventeenth century Gonçalo Annes Boto was organist chapel master at the parish Church of Santa Cruz, *vila* of Santa Cruz, Graciosa, a small island in the Azorean archipelago. As many musicians that worked in the Azores isles little is known about Boto's life and career. This text examines the known documentation regarding his career also providing some context surrounding his activity at the Church of Santa Cruz.

The knowledge of music history in the Azorean archipelago during the early modern period is still a persisting blank canvas of study in the context of the global Portuguese music historiography. There are several references to music in Angra Cathedral, by far the most significant ecclesiastical institution in the islands, as well as some conventual – mostly Franciscan – music references. Although sparse and frequently vague, these references have been repeated throughout many studies often overshadowing many musicians and chapel masters that worked in the islands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

One of such cases is the island of Graciosa, one of the smallest in the Azorean archipelago and also one of the smallest centres in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Diocese which had a documented religious musical activity in the last decades of the sixteenth century, and throughout the seventeenth century.

Graciosa Island is located in the central group of islands of the Azorean archipelago, Terceira being its closest island. There are two *vilas* – Santa Cruz and Praia – which during some time corresponded to two municipalities.

One of the first accounts of the *vila* of Santa Cruz was given by the Azorean humanist Gaspar Frutuoso who wrote his manuscript *Saudades da Terra* sometime between 1586 and 1590. In the Book VI he stated that the *vila* of Santa Cruz had at the end of the sixteenth century around 540 houses and 1.935 inhabitants. There was a small marsh in the centre of the *vila*, an important source of fresh water where the cattle went to drink and which fostered the existence of these animals in the village where water sources were scarce. Next to the marsh was a large square where horses run and many amusements were frequently organised (Frutuoso, 1998, p. 143-144).

Written throughout the second half of the seventeenth century the *Crónicas* of the Franciscan friar Agostinho de Monte Alverne were mostly focused on the settlement process of the island and the foundation of the only Franciscan convent in Santa Cruz. He only dedicated one paragraph to each of the two *vilas*. Regarding Santa Cruz, he mentioned that the *vila* had 520 houses and 1.812 inhabitants, an estimate lower (or a more realistic number) than in Frutuoso's account (Monte Alverne, 1962, p. 237).

When describing the *vila* of Santa Cruz, Gaspar Frutuoso mentions the parochial church of Santa Cruz which provides a testimony of the institution's structure by 1586 to 1590. It is described as a three-nave temple with columns and six arches in each side. It had three lateral chapels on each side. (Frutuoso, 1998, p. 143-144).

The third main source for a description of the *vila* of Santa Cruz was provided by the Franciscan chronicler Fr. Diogo das Chagas in his *Espelho Cristalino em Jardim de Várias Flores*, a manuscript probably written between 1646 and 1654. Almost certainly based on Frutuoso’s account, Chagas, as a well-travelled individual through the islands expanded his predecessor’s information with more details, dividing Graciosa into four *freguesias* (corresponding to four parishes) two of which were *vilas*, as well as twelve hermitages, a house of *Misericórdia*, and a Franciscan convent. The parish church was located to the South of the village, described by Chagas as “*fermosa igreja de naves*” (a beautiful church with naves), with a bell tower (Chagas, 1989, p. 539).



Image 1

The parish Church of Santa Cruz, Graciosa Island (current view).

Fr. Diogo das Chagas stated that the church had a vicar (*vigário*), six beneficiaries (*beneficiados*), cura, treasurer (*tesoureiro*), chapel master, and organist (Chagas, 1989, p. 539). By the time the *Saudades da Terra* was written, Frutuoso identified Braz Dias Rodovalho as the church’s vicar, a theologian and preacher, and also are referenced the presence of four beneficiaries and a treasurer. From this group of clergymen we gather that it was a relatively significant collegiate for the ecclesiastical context of the island which, in some respect, contradicts the assumption of a smaller island having lesser-important religious institutions. It was, without any doubt, the most important of Graciosa Island, followed by the church of the other *vila* of Praia, that had only two beneficiaries (a normal occurrence throughout the archipelago).

Chagas identified as the church’s first vicar Fr. Gonçalo Coenteiros which might have been a Franciscan friar. He then follows with some brief notes on the following vicars. Coenteiros was followed by Lourenço Gomez, which renounced the title and was serving in another church by the time the *Espelho Cristalino* was being written.

Braz Dias Rodovalho was the next vicar who, according to Chagas, was born in Angra and renounced his position at Santa Cruz to return to his home town to serve at the

Cathedral. Regarding the vicar Rodovalho, it is possible that this was the same Braz Dias Rodovalho that was targeted in an Inquisition process in Angra in 1592. In the process he was identified as the son of Matias Pamplona de Miranda and Maria Luis Merens, being the eldest of their four siblings. He was probably born in 1571 being a relatively young clergyman during the time Frutuoso was writing his manuscript.

Two names follow: Gonçalo Pacheco and Gonçalo Godinho. The first was born in Graciosa and was a *licenciado* in Canon Law, a descendant of the island's first captain-donatory. The second was born in the village of Água de Pau in São Miguel island, *licenciado* in Theology, and very able preacher, left a significant sum of money after his death destined to the foundation of a feminine convent in the island (Chagas, 1989, p. 463-464). Chagas mentioned that this project hadn't materialised, and that the amount reverted to the confraternities of the Church of Santa Cruz.

Manuel Homem was the last vicar mentioned, which was in service by the time Fr. Diogo das Chagas was writing the *Espelho Cristalino*, a young man at the time, born in Angra, consider by Chagas as a good theologian (Chagas, 1989, p. 465).



Image 2

Interior of the Church of Santa Cruz, Graciosa Island.

During this period several individuals served in the posts of organist and chapel master mentioned by Fr. Diogo das Chagas in his manuscript. On 30 September 1591, following the visitation to the church of the Bishop of Angra D. Manuel de Gouveia, the organist of Santa Cruz was to have an annual salary of 4.000 réis paid in quarters of 1.000 réis each (Viterbo, 1910, p. 537). He was to be paid in the same way the island's clergy was paid.

On 3 November 1607, following the appointment by the Bishop of Angra D. Agostinho Ribeiro on 21 May 1606, Gonçalo Annes Boto was confirmed as *tangedor dos órgãos* (organist) of the Church of Santa Cruz (Viterbo, 1910, p. 537-538). He was to receive the established salary of the organist, that is, the annual 4.000 réis stipulated in 1591. Gonçalo Annes Boto thus first appears in the service of Santa Cruz has the church's organist.

Two years later, on 25 September, the post of chapel master of the Church of Santa

Cruz was created by royal decree. Again as in the previous documents, this follows the visitation of the church, this time by the Bishop of Angra D. Jerónimo Teixeira Cabral. The Bishop found the necessity of having a chapel master in the church for the divine offices to be celebrated with the utmost solemnity because the island was very noble and of much profit. The chapel master was to have the same annual salary as the chapel master of the other churches of the Diocese of receiving ten *cruzados* (Viterbo, 1910, p. 538). The *provedor da fazenda* found that Gonçalo Annes Boto, beneficiary in the church, gathered all the qualities necessary to serve in this post. This means that, by 1609, Boto was already one of the six beneficiaries of the Collegiate or that he accumulated the post of organist with the benefice since his appointment in 1606, or event that, sometime during these three years he had entered in one of the benefices of the Collegiate. In any case, the appointment of Gonçalo Annes Boto as chapel master at Santa Cruz meant that he had to relinquish any of his previous posts (as organist, beneficiary, or both) in order to fulfil the full dedication to the post of chapel master as stipulated by the royal decree.

Gonçalo Annes Boto maintained the post of chapel master until at least 1620. On 13 October of that year he was still identified as a beneficiary and chapel master at Santa Cruz. In a royal decree, Boto is confirmed on his salary as chapel master of 4.000 annual réis paid in the same manner as the island's clergy was paid. He was to be paid in full after the church vicar (probably Gonçalo Pacheco or Gonçalo Godinho) provide a certificate that attested that Boto was serving in the church as chapel master (Viterbo, 1910, p. 539).

Boto served for a long time as chapel master at Santa Cruz. His name appears again in 1644 in a document that identifies him as a *beneficiado* of the Collegiate. This suggests that he remained a *beneficiado* since the early seventeenth century. The document also confirms that he was a clergyman, although the title of *beneficiado* given to him in 1609 indirectly confirms that by that time he had to be an ordained priest in order to request the beneficiary place in the Collegiate. On 11 October 1644 Boto was presented to a *beneficio simples* in the Collegiate that had been vacant following the death of its former holder the priest António Pacheco. Boto was to receive the same sustenance as his predecessor (Viterbo, 1910, p. 540). By this time there is no mention of him still occupying the post of chapel master at the church, which suggests that he might have renounced this position in order to enter the vacant *beneficio simples*.

Gonçalo Annes Boto thus served in the parish Church of Santa Cruz of Graciosa Island for over three decades first as the church's organist, and later as chapel master. It is interesting to verify his attraction for other positions within the church's hierarchy, most notably as a *beneficiado* in the Collegiate. His identification as a *beneficiado* and the probable transition between this post and the post of chapel master and, afterwards, again to another post of *beneficiado* seems a bit confusing. As was usual in other Portuguese secular ecclesiastical institutions (notably cathedrals and collegiate churches such as Santa Cruz), a musical post was soon abandoned when an ecclesiastical one appeared and very rarely the way around. In the case of Boto he seems to have transited from *beneficiado* to chapel master, and, afterwards, probably in an older stage of his life returned to an ecclesiastical title that would secure him a comfortable living which a musical post with lower paying and more demanding obligations could not.



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