

O Brother, Where Art Thou?

An update on the Spanish oboist-composer virtuosi Juan, Manuel, and José Pla

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Anyone who has engaged in scholarly research knows the process often involves a myriad of difficulties, inconsistencies in information, and, at times, dead ends. In fact, not only does research occasionally yield misinformation and lead scholars far afield, it also never guarantees results. A cursory search for “Pla” in most search engines today, for instance, invariably returns numerous findings related to polylactic acid and the People’s Liberation Army (or PLA) of China. And even when a promising source on eighteenth-century Spanish music is identified, a search for “Pla” within the document typically results in the immediate location of all words containing the letters P-L-A, regardless of where the letters appear in the word, but rarely locates instances of the surname for the eighteenth-century Spanish oboist-composers Juan, Manuel, and José. Before long, the ubiquitous appearance of words such as play, played, playing, applause, plagal, plain, plainchant, place, plan, plausible, plagiarism, display, replace, complain, explain, and so on becomes rather irksome. None of this, however, is a surprise to the seasoned scholar, and there are certainly other composer’s names whose search results require clever filtering.¹

Even when sought-after information is discovered, the data can be inaccurate, despite sincere intentions of scholars, editors, and publishers to make it as fact-based as possible. Most scholars would agree, for example, that their predecessors, far from intentionally trying to disseminate false information, did the best they could to publish reliable facts with the data available to them. Nevertheless, errors persist—some of which endure for many years. Indeed, not much has changed since Josep Dolcet remarked 40 years ago, “The biography of the Pla brothers is extremely confusing and full of gaps and is at the same time plagued with inconsistencies among the different documents, which either touch the subject superficially or contradict each other.”² While fallibilities will always be part of research, and no discipline is immune from such vexation, it is important to remember that the investigative process remains an indispensable and valuable means for learning about our world, both past and present, since it has yet to be surpassed by a superior method of gaining higher understanding in any field of inquiry.

With the aforementioned in mind, then, the present study attempts to fulfill two objectives: (1) to piece together a variety of information about the Pla brothers that has recently come to light and, based on its synthesis, add to what is currently known, and (2) to present the most up-to-date news of the brothers’ musical activities (which has not been collected in one place in nearly two decades) in the hopes of reconciling some of the incongruous data surrounding their lives. As an update to my previous article,³ therefore, the present study seeks not only to correct errors that have lasted for many years, but also to paint the latest picture of the Plas to date—one crisper and fuller than has hitherto been published.

Because several accounts of Juan's, Manuel's, and José's chief musical activities have already been written, an in-depth recounting of the brothers' travels (or lack thereof in Manuel's case) has been omitted here. A cursory recounting of the brothers' most salient travels and accomplishments, however, is unavoidable in the discussion that follows. Thus, while the intent is not to restate information that is already known, occasional pieces of information familiar to scholarly music circles are both necessary and appropriate to include for contextual purposes.

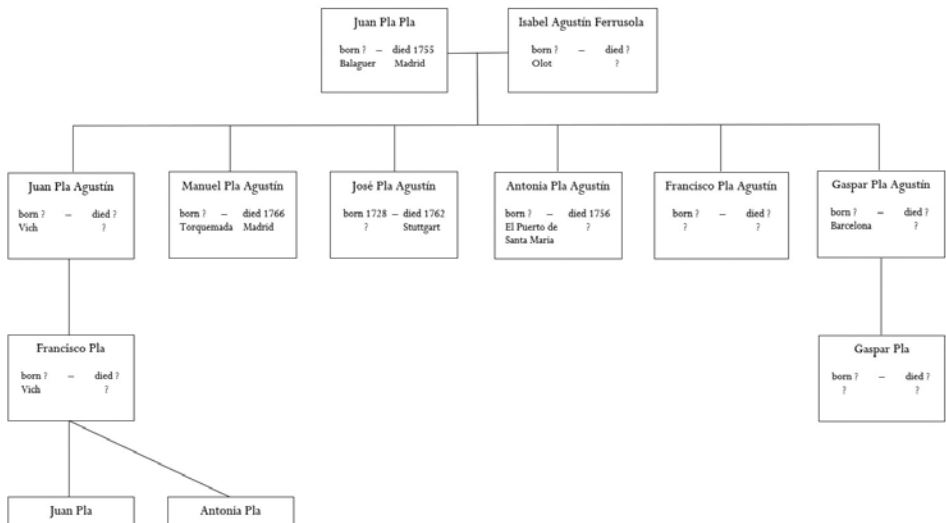
The reader will recall that the Plas were a family of Catalan musicians, the most well-known of whom were the brothers Juan, Manuel, and José. All three were virtuoso oboists and composers. During the middle of the eighteenth century, Juan and José traveled throughout Europe composing and performing at various courts and public concerts. Their wanderings led them to several prominent musical centers in Europe, including Madrid, Lisbon, Paris, London, and Stuttgart. Manuel, however, lived and remained in Spain where he composed and performed in the Royal Spanish Guards band and the Descalzas Reales chapel in Madrid. Both the popularity of their music and the fame the brothers acquired on account of their extraordinary oboe skills resulted in a generous diffusion of their works during the middle and later parts of the eighteenth century.

In spite of this, however, a basic, underlying issue that has plagued research surrounding the Plas for centuries, and which surprisingly continues to this day, is the spelling of the brothers' names—both their Christian names and surname. Beryl Kenyon de Pascual has already identified many misspellings of "Pla" that have appeared in publications over the years, particularly in biographical dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference works.⁴ And while the name, Manuel, is usually not misspelled, I have seen "Manel."⁵ Perhaps this is to be expected for three relatively obscure eighteenth-century musicians, two of whom appear to have composed many works jointly. Conceivably more confusing, however, is mistaking Juan for José (or vice-versa), determining which brother was older, which brother traveled to which country, and which brother played which instrument. Though not every case of mistaken identity, nation of residence, or preferred instrument is solvable, data does exist for portraying a more accurate picture of the Plas' lives.

In her modern edition, *Dos Trios de Pla*, Kenyon de Pascual proposed that Juan, Manuel, and José were the children of Juan Pla Pla (from Balaguer) and Isabel Agustín Ferrusola (from Olot), but that Juan and Isabel had additional children as well—six altogether: Juan, Manuel, José, Antonia, Francisco, and Gaspar.⁶ Regarding the family, Pascual writes:

Juan and Isabel appear to have led an unsettled existence, since Antonia was born in El Puerto de Santa María, Manuel in Torquemada, Gaspar in Barcelona (?) and Juan in Vich (?). Juan, the father, died in Madrid in 1755, Antonia (who lived apart from her husband, Don Francisco Pedro Calderón, son of the Conde de San Juan) in 1756, José in 1762 at the age of 34 and Manuel in 1766. José was thus born in 1728. Both he and Manuel remained bachelors [sic]. From the order in which the brothers are listed in legal documents, Juan would appear to have been older than Manuel and José younger. There is further evidence that Juan was older than José.⁷

Additional confusion over members of the Pla family arises from the likelihood that Gaspar may have had a son with the same name, and that Juan (Bautista) Pla Agustín may have had a son named Francisco who, in turn, had two children named Juan and Antonia (Example 1).⁸



Example 1. Pla family tree.

Early years to 1750

We know that Juan Bautista was performing music in the service of King Philip V in Madrid in 1738, and that by 1744, Manuel and José had joined him. In addition to becoming acquainted with Domenico Scarlatti while serving in this capacity, the three brothers undoubtedly met the oboists who held posts in the Real Capilla (royal chapel) at the time, namely, Joseph Gesembach and Luis Boucquet.⁹ It is important to note that none of the three Pla brothers was ever given a permanent post in the Spanish Royal Chapel despite their virtuosic skills on the oboe. Though all three are known to have deputized in the chapel on occasion, it is not altogether clear why Juan, Manuel, or José were never appointed to the Capilla. To be sure, all the brothers were young in the early 1740s and presumably did not possess extensive experience at the time, but all three were Spanish, and all played beautifully. Whatever the reason may have been, another oboist, Manuel Cavazza, who began playing in the court chapel as a supernumerary in 1742, was granted an official post in the royal chapel in 1744.¹⁰

It is interesting to speculate whether Cavazza's royal appointment was the reason Juan and José are no longer recorded performing in Madrid after 1744, either as instrumentalists of the royal guards or as performers in the Descalzas Reales convent chapel. While Manuel remained in Madrid his entire life, Juan was already performing at the Real Camera in Lisbon in 1747. Did Juan perhaps leave Madrid in 1744 after Cavazza received the post in the Spanish Royal Chapel to search for employment elsewhere, or did he remain in Madrid until he went to Portugal in 1747? And, if he remained in Madrid, did he and his brothers

continue performing at musical events—events which may be documented but have yet to be discovered? Kenyon de Pascual supports the idea that not receiving a position in the royal chapel may have been the reason Juan entered the service of the king of Portugal¹¹ and that Juan may have already begun his wanderings abroad earlier than 1747.¹²

Another possible scenario arises depending on what month two new Spanish court oboists, Francisco Mestres and Juan López, arrived in Madrid in 1747. We know, for instance, that Juan was in Lisbon by August 12, 1747, and that José joined him before the end of the year.¹³ If Mestres and López were appointed to the Spanish Royal Chapel prior to August 1747, Juan may have left Madrid for Lisbon at *this* time, with José following a few months later. If, on the other hand, Mestres and López were not appointed to the royal chapel until after August 1747, Juan would not have met them, though it is possible that José could have, and probable that Manuel did. Neither Juan nor José, however, could have met the oboist Luis Misón, who entered the service of the royal chapel in 1749, although Manuel most likely would have. The fact is that Juan's and José's whereabouts from 1744 to 1747 remain a mystery.

In retrospect, the royal chapel in Madrid—indeed all of Spain—forfeited an opportunity to hold on to an extraordinary, native musician when Juan departed for Lisbon. Unlike his brothers, we have no record of Juan performing in Spain again after he left the country. But Spain's loss was Portugal's gain in 1747. A letter written August 12, 1747, from King João V's secretary, Alexandre de Gusmão, to the Archdeacon of Oliveira, who was planning to visit the Portuguese court, states, "The more Your Majesty delays, the more you miss the chance to hear a person who would certainly please you and who may not be here for long, and it is a Catalan whom Scarlatti recommended to me and who in Madrid was all his; he is a great composer, both on the psaltery and on the oboe."¹⁴

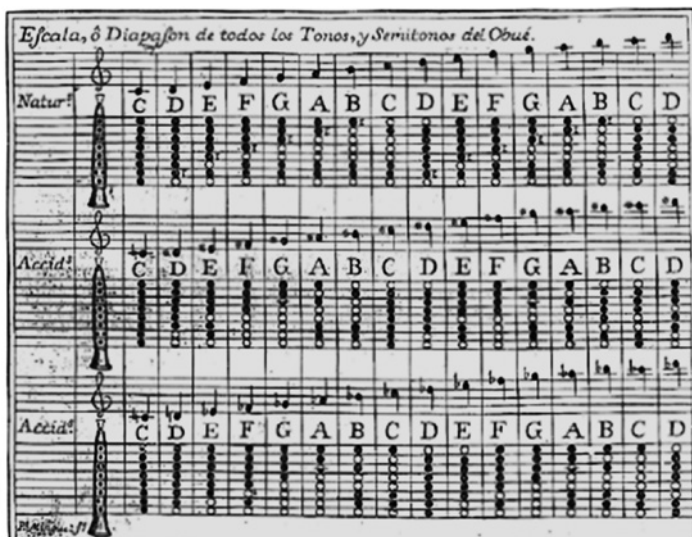
1750s

In 1751, due to salary disagreements, Juan and José left Lisbon for Paris, where they began performing at the Concert Spirituel. Both brothers played the oboe at various concerts from November 1751 to April 1752, and again on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 1752. At these concerts, Juan occasionally played the psaltery and José, the violin. Between April and December of 1752, Juan and José were invited to perform at the chapel and chamber of the king of France. Several sources, for instance, corroborate that "On the 23rd (October 1752) there was a concert in the queen's room where... Los Sres. Plas [sic], Spaniards, once again welcomed into the music of the king's chapel and chamber, played alone and in duo different songs and oboe concertos, and the eldest performed many pieces of music on the psaltery."¹⁵ Of the vast number of works undoubtedly performed at the Concert Spirituel in 1751–1752 (works likely written by various composers from all over Europe), several were composed by the Plas. David Charlton has recently proposed that among the thirty-three concerts held in 1751, three performances included works by one or both Pla brothers, and among the twenty-four concerts given in 1752, more than fifteen performances included works by the Plas.¹⁶ The Plas' last recorded performance at the Concert Spirituel was Christmas Day 1752. Between March 1753 and March 1754, Juan and José were in London performing evening concerts at the Great Room Dean Street, Soho. March 17, 1754, is the

last date the Plas are recorded in London. After this, it is generally maintained that the two brothers temporarily parted ways.

Because Juan arrived at the Württemberg court early in 1755 and José is known to have composed a *Stabat Mater* for the count of Peñafiorida in 1756,¹⁷ it is reasonable to assume that the brothers headed to their respective destinations (i.e., Juan to Stuttgart and José to Madrid) immediately upon leaving London. But a 2011 article by Joseba Berrocal suggests that *both* Juan and José may have traveled to Madrid at this time, based upon minor involvement they may have had in the compilation of Pablo Minguet y Irol's treatise, *Reglas y Advertencias Generales* (Rules and General Recommendations).¹⁸ Berrocal's investigation is thought provoking, to say the least, and the reader is encouraged to consult the work before reading further to acquire a general frame of reference for the ensuing discussion.

Briefly stated, Berrocal's article posits that Juan and/or José Pla are the likely authors of a singular oboe fingering chart that appears in the 1774 reissue of Minguet's *Reglas y Advertencias Generales*, a treatise originally published in 1754 (see Example 2). Though the copies of the 1754 treatise preserved in Madrid's Biblioteca Nacional do not contain the fingering chart in question, Berrocal nevertheless asserts that the chart was designed in 1754, and that other prominent oboists who were active in Madrid at the time, such as Manuel Cavazza, Luis Misón, and even Manuel Pla are unlikely to have authored it.¹⁹ Other details regarding the genesis of Minguet's treatise and the manner in which it was initially sold to the public are discussed in the article along with the fact that the fingering chart is the first of its kind to include the note D-sharp^{'''} (enharmonic E-flat^{'''}), a rather high (and rare) note for the oboe in the mid-eighteenth century.²⁰ Most of the article's finer points are beyond the scope of this study, and the reader is invited to probe Berrocal's essay further. What chiefly concerns us here is the plausibility of Juan and José's connection to the oboe chart in Minguet's treatise.



Example 2. Oboe fingering chart from Minguet y Irol's *Reglas y Advertencias Generales* (1754–1774).

Berrocal's primary reason for asserting the Plas are the likely authors of the fingering chart appears to be a performance allegedly given by the two brothers for the queen of Spain, Maria Barbara, in 1752, which Berrocal cites from Baltasar Saldoni's biographical dictionary of Spanish musicians.²¹ In his article, Berrocal not only specifies Queen Maria Barbara, wife of King Ferdinand VI (r. 1746–1759), as the primary audience member of the Plas' performance,²² but also states that Minguet, who was in Madrid in 1752, "consulted with them [the Pla brothers] in search of his own fingering for the oboe and perhaps in connection with other aspects later included in the *Reglas y Advertencias Generales*."²³ This was reputedly possible because, based on the aforementioned information provided by Saldoni, the Pla brothers were present at court (i.e., the Spanish court) in 1752.

Berrocal's reading of the evidence notwithstanding, it is nonetheless instructive to recount and clarify Juan and José's whereabouts in 1752 by going back to the sources that reference the brothers during that year, in order to determine whether or not they could be the authors of Minguet's oboe fingering chart. Upon examination, it appears that when Berrocal referred to Saldoni's dictionary to establish the Plas' location in October 1752, he failed to include all the information given in the entry for the brothers. In Saldoni's dictionary, for example, the entry begins by stating, "In a correspondence *from Paris*, inserted in the *Madrid Gazette* 14 November 1752, we read the following:..."²⁴ Thus, it appears that the royal audience member for whom Juan and José actually performed on October 23, 1752, as reported by the *Madrid Gazette*, was by all accounts the queen of France, Maria Carolina, and not Maria Barbara.²⁵ Many other sources corroborate that Juan and José were at the king of France's chapel and chamber in October 1752 and not the king of Spain's.²⁶

Does this mean, then, that neither Juan nor José can be the author of the oboe fingering chart in Minguet's treatise? Not necessarily. Though Juan and José were in France in April, October, and December of 1752, we technically do not know where they were *between* April and October (or in November) of that year. Could they have traveled to Madrid during this time for a brief stay, collaborated with Minguet on the oboe chart, and returned to France in time to perform for the queen? To me, this is unlikely, even if the customary methods of mid-eighteenth-century travel allow it as a possibility. To theorize that the brothers left France immediately *after* performing for the queen to confer briefly with Minguet in November 1752 before hastily returning to France in time to perform on Christmas Eve is even less likely. We must also be careful not to dismiss inadvertently other contemporary accounts of the Pla brothers' whereabouts in 1752 by nonchalantly accepting any possible European locale as tenable. Deeming the initial hypothesis credible, for instance, would all but invalidate the *Mercure de France's* record that during the summer of 1752 (i.e., throughout the summer), Juan and José "were engaged at the chapel and at the king's chamber,"²⁷ since, presumably, it would have taken the brothers nearly two months to make the journey from Paris to Madrid and back.

While on one hand it is unlikely that the two brothers made a round trip from France to Spain and back in 1752, it is possible that both returned home to Spain after leaving London in 1754 since we do not know their precise whereabouts from late March 1754 to early 1755. For years, it has been commonly accepted that Juan and José went their separate ways after completing their tour of England, but could Juan have traveled with José to Madrid before

heading to Germany? The time frame seems to allow this. Indeed, the time between Juan's exit from London and his arrival in Stuttgart could have been as long as eleven months.

In her introduction to *Dos Trios de Pla*, Kenyon de Pascual states that Juan was already playing at the duke of Württemberg's court during "the winter season of 1754–55."²⁸ Both Walther Pfeilsticker's and Eberhard Schauer's accounts, however, report Juan as arriving at the duke's court on February 12, 1755 and not officially being installed in the duke's service until May 28, 1755.²⁹ To my knowledge, this discrepancy has not yet been reconciled. Yet, even without knowing the exact date Juan arrived in Stuttgart, his arrival can still be safely narrowed to between November 1754 and February 1755. Based on this premise, if Juan reached Germany by November 1754, he would have had roughly seven months to return to Madrid from London, consult with Minguet, and make the trip to Stuttgart. Of course, if he did not arrive in Germany until sometime after November 1754, more time would have been available.

In his biographical dictionary, Saldoni reports that the specific portion of the 1774 edition of *Reglas y Advertencias Generales*, which includes the oboe fingering chart, was the sixth and last constituent section of Minguet's 1754 publication—a smaller treatise entitled, *Reglas y Advertencias Generales para tañer la Flauta Travesera, la Flauta Dulce, y la Flautilla*.³⁰ The *Gaceta Oficial de Madrid* advertised this smaller treatise as newly available on May 18, 1754.³¹ Based on Berrocal's reading of the evidence, the reason Minguet did not include the oboe fingering chart in the 1754 edition was either because he felt practicing the instrument was "harmful to the chest," or because he considered the oboe an instrument solely "for professionals" (ultimately, Berrocal admits "it is not clear").³² Berrocal does contend, however, that although the oboe chart was not included in the 1754 treatise, it is "strictly contemporary with those [fingering charts] intended for the flute, recorder, and flageolet."³³ On one hand, if this is to mean the chart was created prior to May 18, 1754, then Juan or José (or both brothers) would have had to have discussions with Minguet and develop it fairly soon after leaving London, since, in his "Explanation of the work," Minguet stipulates he "had the collaboration of some 'expert[s]' to be able to complete his knowledge" of the oboe.³⁴ If, on the other hand, Minguet's statement is to mean it was simply created sometime in 1754, independent of a specific date, then it is feasible (and even probable) that one or both of the Pla brothers was responsible for the fingering chart. Perhaps most compelling in this regard is that a set of six trio sonatas "compos'd by Sig.^{rs} Pla's" was published by J. Hardy in London in 1754 for "two German-Flutes, Violins, or Hautboys, with a Bass for the Harpsichord or Violoncello," which contains no less than two instances of E-flat", three instances of D-sharp", and two instances of E".³⁵

All three brothers were, of course, active from 1755 to the end of the decade. Juan performed at Duke Charles Eugene's court in Württemberg more than four years before José joined him in June 1759.³⁶ What is most relevant to include here, however, is a brief update on what is known of Manuel's musical activities in Madrid at this time.

While various accounts concerning Manuel have circulated over the years, the information recorded by Teixidor, Subirá, and Kenyon de Pascual appears to be most accurate. Teixidor (ca. 1750–1814) reports that Manuel, in addition to being an excellent oboist, was an above-average harpsichordist and an "outstanding composer of both instrumental music and sacred and secular vocal music, as evidenced by his symphonies, concertos,

trios, duets, Psalms, Masses, Salves Reginas, a Stabat Mater, *zarzuelas*, serenades, sacred oratorios, *villancicos*, *tonadillas*, arias, songs, and trios in Spanish, and especially the most important scenes of all Metastasio's operas with some complete melodramas, both serious and humorous."³⁷ He goes on to say that Manuel was "a man of such eminent fertility that he put any scene to music just by reading the poetry, and that, according to what we have been informed by authorities of great merit and dignity, sat down at the harpsichord and instantly applied the melodies and harmonies most appropriate to any kind of concepts, singing them and executing them with care."³⁸

Based on Subirá's reading of the evidence, Manuel was "an excellent harpsichordist and an eminent composer. In his output, there are vocal and instrumental pieces and works of both secular and religious music: symphonies, concertos, serenades, trios, duets, arias, carols, and plays. Regarding his productivity, according to historians from earlier times to ours, he shone because of his prodigious ingenuity; it was enough for him to see any poetry, sing it on the spot with an improvised melody, and attach an appropriate keyboard accompaniment."³⁹ Having said this, Subirá concedes that "there may be hyperbole in such a statement, but if so, we do not assume responsibility for the false saying."⁴⁰

Curiously, both Teixidor and Subirá indicate that Manuel was somehow superior to his brothers both on the oboe and as a composer—that in certain ways he "had advantages"⁴¹ over them and "surpassed [them] in merit."⁴² No specific reasons for such claims are given, however, and Kenyon de Pascual is quick to point out that, at least in Teixidor's case, "this may well be a biased opinion, since Teixidor's path may not have crossed those of José and Juan when they were at the height of their powers."⁴³

1760s

Nearly three years after José became a *Kammermusikus* of Duke Carl Eugene's court orchestra, he and Juan traveled to Italy. Although it is not entirely clear whether Juan and José traveled to Italy as a group with the duke of Württemberg's musicians or if they were granted a leave of absence to visit Italy independently from the rest of the orchestra,⁴⁴ Giuseppe Tartini's letter to Padre Martini in May 1762 proves that Juan and José made a stop in Padua.⁴⁵ Martini's letter to Niccolò Jommelli in October of the same year confirms that the two brothers also visited Bologna: "Yesterday evening I had the pleasure of hearing the two famous oboists, who are in the service of his Most Serene Highness."⁴⁶ Sadly, upon returning to Stuttgart less than two months after meeting Martini, José died on December 14, 1762. Though his cause of death has, to my knowledge, not been substantiated, it is thought he passed away from an illness, which he may have begun suffering from on the journey back to Germany.⁴⁷ According to the *Stuttgart Stiftskirche Tote 1697–1784*, José was interred on December 15, 1762 (see Example 3).⁴⁸ Teixidor relates that José had "gained such a place in the esteem of the sovereign through his great merit, that upon dying shortly after taking up residence in Stuttgart, the duke, who was not content to provide him the most expensive of funerals, ordered that he be buried in his own mausoleum."⁴⁹

Deeply affected by his brother's death, Juan requested permission to leave the duke's service, a request that was granted May 19, 1763. Before departing, Juan performed for the duke's birthday festivities, an event lasting two weeks. According to Gerber, "The brother

December 1762		December 1762	
5	VSS	Widow Maria, (widow Maria, Grandin	6
6	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	7
7	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	8
8	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	9
9	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	10
10	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	11
11	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	12
12	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	13
13	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	14
14	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	15
15	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	16
16	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	17
17	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	18
18	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	19
19	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	20
20	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	21
21	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	22
22	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	23
23	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	24
24	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	25
25	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	26
26	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	27
27	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	28
28	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	29
29	VSS	Christoph Zeit, (widow Maria, Grandin	30
30	VSS	Jos. Christoph, (widow Maria, Grandin	31

Example 3. Page 218 from the Stuttgart Stiftskirche Tote 1697–1784 showing José Pla’s death and burial dates, December 14 and 15, 1762, age 34.

who was still alive greatly enhanced the 14-day birthday festival that was set up in 1763 with his playing and was admired by strangers and locals alike.⁵⁰ The duke’s court librarian and Frenchman, Joseph Uriot, described a somewhat more emotional performance by Juan at the festivities: “Mr. Pla, who only a few months ago would not surrender to his brother, whom death took from us, gave his oboe all the delicacy and touch of the flute, and [in doing so] gave back at his will all the magnificence which gives [the oboe] its principal character. In the pieces he played, he seemed worthy of being considered the first oboe of Europe, since he showed all the talent of his late brother, combined with that which was always special to him.”⁵¹

After leaving the Württemberg court in May 1763, Juan’s whereabouts are uncertain until November 1, 1763, when he is recorded performing in a Concert Spirituel once again in Paris. During these months (the summer and autumn of 1763), Juan may have traveled home to Spain to be with family in the wake of José’s death, but a small body of research surrounding the history of the psaltery has unveiled another possible itinerary for Juan during these months—namely, a return trip to Italy to finish some dealings he is known to have had with the Italian psaltery builder and virtuoso, Giambattista Dall’Olio.⁵²

Juan’s abilities as a psaltery player, in addition to his skills on the bassoon, are well established. In 1752, for instance, Juan “performed his own compositions on the salterio in Paris both in a *concert spirituel*, accompanied by his brother on the violin, and before

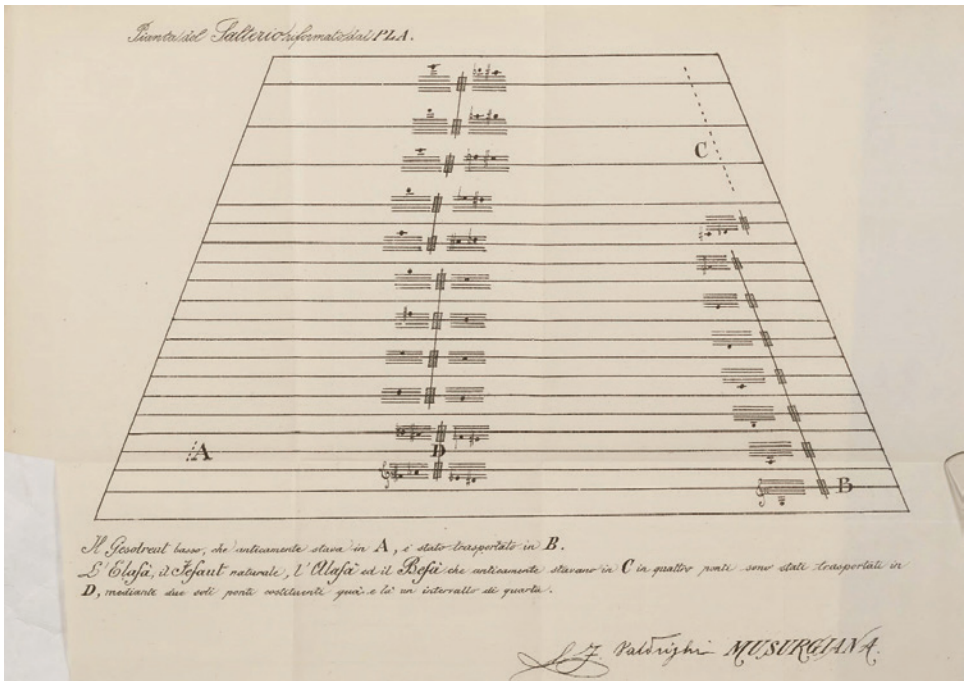
the French queen. During their stay in London in 1753–1754 ‘Sig. Joanni Pla’ played the salterio in two of his concerts and again in 1769 during another visit to that city towards the end of his career.”⁵³ More recently, Paul Gifford has proposed that Juan is not only the “earliest known” Spanish psaltery player, but also was the “best-known virtuoso in Europe.”⁵⁴ Niccolò Jommelli, in fact, composed a sinfonia for psaltery and orchestra for Juan when both musicians were in Württemberg, a sinfonia that Jommelli apparently “rewrote from memory in January 1770.”⁵⁵ In hindsight, it is rather fortunate that Juan’s and Dall’Olio’s paths crossed in the 1760s, especially for psaltery players, primarily because of the suggestions Juan gave Dall’Olio for improving nuances of the instrument’s construction, which, until then, was cumbersome to play. Juan’s unique manner of tuning the instrument also “favorably impressed Dall’Olio,” and this is known to have greatly influenced psaltery players in Italy (see Example 4).⁵⁶



Example 4. An eighteenth-century psaltery.

Most of the information we have about Dall’Olio, psaltery construction in general, and Juan’s suggestions for improving the instrument, survives in an 1879 study by Count Luigi Francesco Valdrighi, a study which quotes substantially from letters written by Dall’Olio.⁵⁷ Valdrighi’s essay, in fact, is the only record we have of Dall’Olio’s valuable 1770 monograph, *Avvertimenti pei suonatori di salterio* (Recommendations for Psaltery Players). Near the end of the study, Valdrighi includes Dall’Olio’s twenty “recommendations” for performing on the psaltery. While these guidelines largely deal with matters such as hand position, fingering, ornamentation, and ring plectra, what is most relevant to us is the last recommendation, where Dall’Olio states, “If somebody wants to play easily in keys requiring flats, he has to arrange the psaltery according to the improvement introduced by the Spaniard Pla, which consists in the alteration of a few bridges, easily achieved on psalteries made according to the old tuning of the Roman Jannesì.”⁵⁸ From Dall’Olio’s remarks, we learn that it was Juan’s modifications to the psaltery that were responsible for enabling eighteenth-century amateurs to play in flat keys with little difficulty (G is the fundamental key of the instrument), and that these refinements involved moving the position of a few bridges.⁵⁹ Although Dall’Olio presents his own blueprint for psaltery construction in his *Avvertimenti*, he specifically endorses Juan’s design to facilitate playing in flat keys, particularly F major, B-flat major, and G minor.⁶⁰ Thankfully, Valdrighi’s study contains diagrams of both Dall’Olio’s and Pla’s instrument models, the latter of which bears the heading “Pianta del Salterio riformato dal PLA” (Plan for the reformed psaltery by PLA).⁶¹ (See Example 5.)

It would be difficult to overstate the impact Pla and Dall’Olio had on psaltery construction and its performance during the second half of the eighteenth century. Yet perhaps the most intriguing question that arises from the foregoing is simply, “When did Juan meet and collaborate with Dall’Olio?” Is it possible, for example, to determine a time frame Juan could have interacted with Dall’Olio long enough for the two to discuss improvements to the psaltery’s construction and tuning for the instrument? The answer to this latter question is yes. Based on what has been presented, it is plausible that both Juan and José met Dall’Olio in the summer or autumn of 1762. The brothers were in Bologna in October



Example 5. Plan for the reformed psaltery by PLA.

of that year, and it is also known that Dall'Olio was a pupil of Padre Martini while he lived in Bologna with his paternal uncle, Don Terenziano.⁶² In addition, there is preserved in the Civic Museum of Modena a refined psalterium built in Bologna by Dall'Olio that is dated 1764 which contains carved and gilded frames and two parchment rosettes that are also gilded. Thus, it seems reasonable to assert that Juan and José became acquainted with Dall'Olio at some point in 1762 (perhaps they were introduced by Martini), discussed any perceived weaknesses or limitations associated with the psalterium, and shared their ideas regarding improvements for the instrument's construction at that time. In all likelihood, Dall'Olio had heard of Juan's psalterium performances in France and England and desired to meet both brothers upon learning of their arrival in Bologna. The Italian was, after all, a talented musicologist, luthier, and organist who published *Sopra la tastatura degli organi e dei cembali* (On the Keyboards of Organs and Harpsichords) in 1779 and *La Musica: Poemetto* (The Music: Poem) in 1794. It is therefore difficult to imagine that Dall'Olio, who later in life became known as a great scholar and a member of numerous literary and scientific academies, who authored critical and scientific essays, and who devoted himself to the translation of Greek and Latin authors, would not have made an effort to meet Juan and José if he knew they were visiting Bologna.

Though all three individuals feasibly could have completed their business with each other in 1762, an alternate possibility is that they failed to finish their affairs before Juan and José were obliged to head back to Stuttgart and, as a result, Juan returned to Italy after José's death in the summer or autumn of 1763 to tie up any loose ends. Such a scenario is

loosely supported by Dall'Olio's somewhat clandestine praise of Juan as a psaltery player in a poem from *La Musica*, where the Italian refers to Juan as "a sagacious Iberian":

Anche il salterio in non piu vista forma
Risorse à nuova vita, e di se paghe
Fece sovente le alemanne orecchie.
Indi vagando in abito mendico
In Italia pervenne, e di Quirino
Un prode discendente, a se chiamollo,
E disse: — Tu sarai mia dolce cura. —
E furon bene alle parole i fatti
Pienamente concordi, chè, vestito
A ponti d'oro e a cento corde in seno,
Potè il salterio anch'egli divenire
Dolce conforto di patrizie orecchie;
Poscia accresciuto di miglior concerto
Mercè dell'arte d'un sagace ibero
Scorse le reggie e fra l'ammiratore
Stupido volgo, e in cerchio a dame illustri,
E a saggi cavalier, di se fe pompa
Per le man de' Pasquali e de' Parisii.

Even the psaltery, in no-longer-seen form,
rose again to new life and paid for itself
by often raising German ears.
Then wandering in a beggar's dress
it arrived in Italy, and of Quirino,
a brave descendant if I may call him,
he said: You will be my sweet care.
And the deeds matched the words.
I fully agree that, with a dress
of golden bridges and a hundred strings in its bosom,
the psaltery could also become
sweet comfort to patrician ears.
It then rose to finer melody and harmony,
thanks to the art of a sagacious Iberian.
It saw royal palaces, and among admirers
of stupid common people, in circles of illustrious ladies,
and to wise knights, I show myself off
at the hands of Pasquali and Parisii.⁶³

In the event Juan did visit Italy at some point in 1763, he would have had to leave the country in time to reach Paris by November 1, 1763, when, as previously mentioned, he performed in a Concert Spirituel. Kenyon de Pascual contends that after this concert, Juan returned to Stuttgart directly, based on information that he was paid "generously" for the winter seasons of 1763–1764 and 1764–1765.⁶⁴ While I have not been able to corroborate this nor confirm Juan's whereabouts throughout 1764, he was once again performing in Stuttgart as of April 23, 1765, and was officially reinstated in the duke's orchestra on August 30 of the same year.⁶⁵ He stayed in Stuttgart until April 1768, when the duke was forced to lower the salaries of many of his musicians. Although Kenyon de Pascual reports that Juan's name "does not appear in the salary list for the year April 1767–April 1768,"⁶⁶ Krauss states that the Italian, Vittorino Colombazzo, who had replaced José on the oboe, and "the older Pla" remained until 1768.⁶⁷ Juan's wanderings from April 1768 to the end of the year have not been traced, but in 1769, after visiting London in February, he returned to Lisbon and was appointed to the Royal Chamber Orchestra of King José I (r. 1750–1777) on October 20.⁶⁸

Before discussing Juan's final years, it must be mentioned that Manuel Pla died, presumably in Madrid, on September 13, 1766, approximately three years and nine months after José. Thanks to Subirá's investigation into the death records preserved at the parish of San Martín, we have an account of Manuel's obituary:

Don Manuel Pla, of single status, native of the town of Torquemada and son of don Juan Pla and doña Isabel Forrusola [sic], parishioner of this church, Varco Street, houses of Son Domingo Ortiz de la Riva. He died intestate and without being able to receive

the holy sacraments. He was oboist of the Royal Descalzas convent chapel and of the Royal Spanish Guards. He leaves [behind] a mother and three brothers. He was buried in this San Martín parish. (13 September 1766).⁶⁹

This notice, coupled with the aforementioned death dates of other Pla family members (see Example 1), makes it clear that Manuel was survived by his mother, Isabel Agustín Ferrusola, and his brothers Juan, Francisco, and Gaspar. We also learn that Manuel not only belonged to the parish of San Martín, but that he is also buried there. Based on Kenyon de Pascual's reading of the evidence, surviving manuscripts of "religious plays and ... entr'acte pieces composed by M. Pla or Sr. Pla" in the Biblioteca Nacional that are dated between 1757 and 1762, "may all be safely attributed to Manuel."⁷⁰

1770 to ?

Surprisingly, nearly every source I have located that mentions Juan's final trip to the Portuguese court reports that he was there between 1769 and 1773 and that his yearly salary was 352,000 réis.⁷¹ What is not surprising is the number of modern-day theories that have been advanced as to where Juan went after leaving Lisbon. These theories are generally of two types: (1) those that fail to make clear that Juan's proposed whereabouts after 1773 are merely speculation and (2) those that contain either incorrect citation of source material or none at all. Needless to say, both types are vexing. One reference, for example, claims that after playing several concerts on the bassoon and psaltery in London in 1769, Juan returned to Lisbon "and then Madrid" and cites Dolcet's 1992 study as the source of information. But in this study, Dolcet unequivocally states, "We presently have no documents about his [Juan's] later activities"—that is, after 1773.⁷² Another reference mentions that Juan "is said to have died while on a visit to Paris to arrange other publications" but does not indicate the source of this information. Thus, until proven otherwise, the only appropriate conviction is that Juan's "career after 1773 is still a mystery."⁷³ In other words, Juan's destination(s) after leaving Lisbon, whether Madrid, Paris, or elsewhere, still cannot be established with any degree of certainty.

So, what, if anything, can the reader conclude regarding the final years of Juan's life? Perhaps a closer look at his family tree can be helpful. In a footnote from the biographical details of *Dos Trios de Pla*, for instance, Kenyon de Pascual reveals that "in 1788 a Francisco Pla, born in Vich and resident in Madrid, son of *Juan Pla* (still alive) also from Vich, made his will," and cites Protocolo 19743, f. 367 of the Madrid Archivo Histórico de Protocolos as the source of this data. She goes on to state that "Francisco's children were called Juan and Antonia. It is possible, but not proven, that ... Francisco's father [was] . . . Juan Pla Agustín."⁷⁴ Despite my inability to verify this alleged family connection, the information appears to constitute a valid possibility; that is, lack of confirmation does not preclude the possibility that Juan could still have been alive in 1788. Ultimately, it is hoped this data will, in time, lead to the discovery of what happened to Juan toward the end of his life and, perhaps, even when (and where) he died.

Coda

Moving beyond the biographical update of Juan, Manuel, and José presented above, it should be mentioned that an update of the Plas' catalogue of works is long overdue. To be sure, Dolcet's pioneering catalogue of 1987 has been an invaluable resource up to the present day, not only for compositions by the Plas, but also for eighteenth-century Spanish music in general.⁷⁵ Yet, to my knowledge, nothing is known about the symphonies performed at the Concert Spirituel in Paris on September 8, 1753 and April 4, 1755, nor about a symphony in F major allegedly composed by Manuel Pla in Madrid, and none of these works appear in Dolcet's catalogue.⁷⁶ Moreover, various documents speak of an array of vocal works by Manuel Pla that are not listed in Dolcet's catalogue, though Ana Lombardía's study involving six violin duets by Manuel (chamber works that do appear in Dolcet's catalogue) is enlightening.⁷⁷ Reports of other extant pieces currently attributed to one or more Pla brothers which are absent from Dolcet's catalogue provide further reason for updating the present one. Because many of these reports are scattered and confusing, a separate study founded on the cornerstone of Dolcet's 1987 work is needed to properly manage the widespread data that undoubtedly will be involved.

In the introduction to his catalogue, Dolcet describes the Pla brothers as practically "unpublished and unknown."⁷⁸ While this was written nearly forty years ago, his words still ring true in many respects. Despite all the years that have passed since the catalogue was published, for instance, we still do not know the precise date any of the Pla brothers were born, any details of their upbringing, nor anything about their musical education. Indeed, more time and research are needed to fill in the gaps of information surrounding their life and work that continue to linger. In Dolcet's words, "Greater concreteness in the data and dates will have to wait for the results of an exhaustive internal and external critique of all the sources and documents available."⁷⁹ In the end, it is hoped that the present study has, in part, served as a response to Dolcet's entreaty for further research on the Plas—a response that enables musicians someday to view these Spanish virtuosos not as "a long-forgotten family of composers who really ought to be researched and performed more often," but rather as a significant "Catalan musical patrimony"—that is, as "an important part of just how broad the vitality of 18th-century music really was."⁸⁰



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Verlag, 2018). In the fall of 2022, Matthew was awarded a sabbatical from Wayne State during which time he studied music composition at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. His research interests include eighteenth-century counterpoint and canon.

Endnotes

- 1 It is probably safe to say that the names Mozart and Beethoven do not have as much inherent ambiguity as Pla.
- 2 Josep Dolcet, “L’obra dels germans Pla. Bases per a una catalogació,” *Anuario Musical* 42 (1987): 1–2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
- 3 Matthew Haakenson, “Two Spanish brothers revisited: recent research surrounding the life and instrumental music of Juan Bautista Pla and José Pla,” *Early Music* 35/1 (2007): 83–94.
- 4 See, for instance, Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, “Juan Bautista Pla and José Pla: Two neglected oboe virtuosos of the 18th century,” *Early Music* 18 (1990): 109. “Plad,” “Blasa,” and “Blasi” can also now be added to this list.
- 5 That Juan Bautista is sometimes rendered Joan Baptista and José as Josep is not uncommon as these are the Catalan spellings of their names.
- 6 Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios de Pla* (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Musicología, 1987), 13. It may be helpful to note that Spanish custom is to use a double surname, the first element of which is the father’s family name and the second the mother’s maiden name (that is, *her* father’s family name). A woman keeps her maiden name after marriage but drops her mother’s family name and replaces it with *de* plus her husband’s family name. In addition, the two names that form the full surname are sometimes joined by *y* (and).
- 7 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 13.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Bruce Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe: A History of the hautboy from 1640–1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 457. Based on Haynes’s reading of the evidence, the oboist Claudio Brienne left the royal chapel in 1736, Boucquet in 1744, and Gesembach in 1749.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 449. As Haynes indicates, while Cavazza was born in Spain, his father was Italian. See also Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, “El primer oboe Español que formó parte de la Real Capilla: Don Manuel Cavazza,” *Revista de Musicología* 7/2 (1984): 431–34.
- 11 Kenyon de Pascual, “Two neglected oboe virtuosos,” 109.
- 12 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 14.
- 13 Alexandre de Gusmão, *Cartas*, ed. Andrée Rocha (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional—Casa da Moeda, 1981), 130–31; see also Manuel Carlos de Brito, “Portuguese-Spanish musical relations during the 18th century,” *España en la Música de Occidente* 2 (1985): 135.
- 14 Gusmão, *Cartas*, 130–131.
- 15 Baltasar Saldoni, *Diccionario efemérides de músicos españoles* (Madrid: D. Antonio Perez Dubrull, 1881), 4:256. See also Josep Carreras, “Els germans Pla: oboïstes de la XVIII centuria,” *Revista Musical Catalana* 7/76–77 (1910): 113; and Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, “La música Española para salterio en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII,” *Revista de Musicología* 8/1 (1985): 109.
- 16 David Charlton, *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 195.
- 17 That is, Count Xavier Maria de Munibe e Idiáquez (1729–1785).
- 18 Joseba Berrocal, “Consideraciones sobre el papel del oboe en las *Reglas y Advertencias Generales* de Pablo Minguet y Irol (1752–1774),” *Artígrama* 26 (2011): 817–835.
- 19 Berrocal also explains why he rejects Minguet himself, along with other competent oboists in Madrid at the time as possible authors of the oboe chart.
- 20 The pitch designation system used throughout this article is (middle C = c’).
- 21 Saldoni, *Diccionario*, 4:256.
- 22 Berrocal, “Consideraciones,” 833.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Saldoni, *Diccionario*, 4:256. Emphasis added. [“En una correspondencia de París, inserta en la *Gaceta de Madrid* del 14 de Noviembre de 1752, leímos lo siguiente...”]
- 25 Cf. the sources listed in note 15 above. In Carreras’s article, the author erroneously identifies the queen of France as Maria Charlotte. See note 5 of Carreras, “Els germans Pla,” 113.
- 26 In addition to the sources cited in note 15 above, see Josep Dolcet, “Katalonische Oboenvirtuosos am Hof Karl Eugens von Württemberg: Die Brüder Pla,” *Tibia* 17/1 (1992): 34; Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 14; Kenyon de Pascual, “Two neglected

- oboe virtuosi,” 109; Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1792), 2:158; Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, “The Spanish eighteenth-century *salterio* and some comments on its Italian counterpart,” *Musique, Images, Instruments* 3 (1997): 42; and Haakenson, “Two Spanish brothers revisited,” 85.
- 27 *Mercure de France*, May 1752, 176. It is worth noting that the summer of 1752 is the only summer Juan and José could have been in France together.
- 28 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 14.
- 29 Walther Pfeilsticker, ed., *Neues Württembergisches Dienerbuch* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung Nachf, 1957), 1:906; Eberhard Schauer, “Das Personal des Württembergischen Hoftheaters 1750–1800,” in *Musik und Musiker am Stuttgarter Hoftheater (1750–1918)*, ed. Reiner Nägele (Stuttgart: Württembergische Landesbibliothek, 2000), 41.
- 30 Saldoni, *Diccionario*, 4:208.
- 31 Though the genesis of Minguet’s *Reglas y Advertencias Generales* is somewhat confusing, it appears that the whole was originally comprised of six individual treatises which were sold separately or together as a set. The titles of the six individual treatises are (1) *Reglas y Advertencias Generales para tañer la Guitarra, Tiple, y Vandola*, (2) *...para tañer la Bandurria*, (3) *...para tañer el Violín*, (4) *...para acompañar sobre la parte con la Guitarra, Clavicordio, Organo, Harpa, Cytara o cualquier otro instrument*, (5) *...para tañer el salterio*, and (6) *...para tañer la Flauta Travesera, la Flauta dulce, y la Flautilla*.
- 32 Berrocal, “Consideraciones,” 828.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 829.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 834.
- 35 See, for example, measure 41 of the *primo* part in the third movement of the second sonata in D minor; measure 17 of the *secondo* part in the first movement of the same sonata; measures 102–103 of the *primo* part in the first movement of the third sonata in F major; and measure 13 of the *secondo* part in the first movement of the sixth sonata in E minor. Pla, *Six Sonatas for two German-Flutes, Violins, or Hautboys, with a Bass for the Harpsichord or Violoncello compos’d by Sig.^{rs} Pla’s* (London: J. Hardy, [1754]). Copies of this edition are preserved in the British Library in London (*GB-Lbl*) and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (*US-Wc*). Like all the sources of the trios, this edition is preserved in separate parts for each instrument.
- 36 Despite several conflicting reports, the duke at this time was Charles Eugene, and not Charles Alexander, who died in 1737. Charles Eugene (1728–93) was the eldest son of Charles Alexander and became duke at the age of nine, though his territory was governed by a Regency until he was declared of age in 1744 (when he was 16). See Alan Yorke-Long, *Music at Court: Four Eighteenth Century Studies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), 42–70.
- 37 Joseph de Teixidor de Barceló, *Historia de la música “española” y Sobre el verdadero origen de la música* (Zaragoza y Lleida: Institut d’Estudis Ilerdencs de la Diputació de Lleida, 1993), 114.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 José Subirá, “Preteritos músicos hispanicos: páginas históricas,” *Academia: Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* 20 (1965), 14.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 14–15.
- 41 Teixidor, *Historia de la música*, 114.
- 42 Subirá, “Preteritos músicos hispanicos,” 14.
- 43 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 14.
- 44 Kenyon de Pascual maintains that the Plas went to Italy with the duke’s ensemble (“The Spanish eighteenth-century *salterio*,” 43).
- 45 Anne Schnoebelen, *Padre Martini’s Collection of Letters in the Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale in Bologna* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1979), 613. This letter is preserved in *I-Bc* as ms. I.17.74.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 312. Martini’s letter (*I-Bc*, ms. I.24.4.), dated October 19, 1762, proves that the Plas were in Bologna on October 18, 1762.
- 47 Carreras simply states that José “lost his health” and was “much mourned by the chapel” [... havent sigut sa perdua molt plorada per la capella]. See Carreras, “Els germans Pla,” 114.
- 48 José’s burial date is also confirmed in the list of Stuttgart deaths for December 1762, recorded in *Heiraten, Taufen u Tote 1747–1765*.
- 49 Teixidor, *Historia de la música*, 114.
- 50 Ernst Ludwig Gerber, *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*

- (Leipzig, 1790-1792), 2:158. Duke Charles Eugene's birthday was February 11.
- 51 Joseph Uriot, *Description des Fêtes Donnees Pendant Quatorze Jours a l'occasion du Jour de Naissance de son Altesse Serenissime' Monseigneur le Duc Regnat De Wurtemberge* (Stuttgart: Christofle Fredric Cotta, Imprimeur-Libraire de la Cour, 1763), 134.
- 52 Dall'Olio (1739-1832), in addition to building psalteries and performing as a virtuoso on the instrument, was an organist and music theorist (among other things). He made psalteries in the 1760s and also gave lessons on the instrument.
- 53 Kenyon de Pascual, "The Spanish eighteenth-century *salterio*," 42-43. Elsewhere, Pascual notes that by February 1769, "[Juan] was back in London, performing in Sheridan's 'Attic Evenings' on the bassoon (!) and the *salterio*." Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 15. Paul Gifford relates that "Juan Bautista Pla played several concerts on the bassoon and *salterio* at London in 1769 before returning to Lisbon" in *The Hammered Dulcimer: A History* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 176. In addition to the *Mercure de France*, Juan's public *salterio* concerts are mentioned in various issues of the April 1753 and February 1769 *Public Advertiser*.
- 54 Gifford, *The Hammered Dulcimer*, 176.
- 55 Ibid. As evidence of the *sinfonia*, Gifford cites two letters from Jommelli to Silva Botelho, the first dated January 16, 1770, and the second, January 23, 1770. See Marita McClymonds, *Niccolò Jommelli: The Last Years, 1769-1774* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1978), 500, 505. In the first letter, Jommelli mentions "the *Sinfonia* that I did for Pla, which, although I do not have it with me, yet, I hope that I remember well enough to rewrite entirely anew." In the following letter, Jommelli assures Botelho, "the *Sinfonia* that I did for Pla in Germany" is attached in a folder with his letter. Gifford notes that this *sinfonia* survives as Mss. 38.1.4 and 24.1.1 at the Biblioteca del Conservatorio di Musica S. Pietro a Majella, Naples. Two modern editions of this work are also available, one arranged for psaltery, two violins, and bass, and one for psaltery and string orchestra: Niccolò Jommelli, *Sinfonia di salterio con violini e basso*, ed. Birgit Stolzenburg and Jörg Thum (Munich: Verlag vierdreieunddreissig [4'33"] Edition Citylights, 2002), and Niccolò Jommelli, *Sinfonia per salterio e archi* (Italy: Edizioni Esarmonia di Sergio Buovolo, 2001).
- 56 Gifford, *The Hammered Dulcimer*, 176. It may be helpful to mention at this point, especially for readers unfamiliar with the psaltery, that the instrument is similar to a dulcimer but plucked with the fingers, a quill, or plectra. Though constructed in various shapes, the trapezoid was a common configuration in the eighteenth century. Its Italian and Spanish name is *salterio*, and despite being less common than the dulcimer, it was "largely confined to Spain and Italy, though it too was played in eighteenth-century England." See Peter Holman, *Life After Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 153-155.
- 57 Luigi Francesco Valdrighi, *Musurgiana: Scrandola, Pianoforte, Salterio* (Modena: Tipografia di Cesare Olivari, 1879). But see also Nelly van Ree Bernard's excellent monograph, *The Psaltery: An Annotated Audio-Visual Review of Different Types of Psaltery* (Buren: Frits Knuf, 1989), and Teresa Chirico, "Il *salterio* in Italia fra Seicento e Ottocento," *Recercare* 13 (2001): 147-199.
- 58 Translation taken from van Ree Bernard, *The Psaltery*, 82. Valdrighi informs us that the Roman, Florido Jannesi, was "above all called the father of the psaltery...But he left it uncomfortable, with all that, since half of the 24 tones were impracticable, as in the harps that were used in 1782." Valdrighi, *Musurgiana*, 40.
- 59 And not just amateurs. Valdrighi tells us that Dall'Olio recommended Pla's psaltery reforms to the prodigy, Italian scholar, philologist, theologian, poet, musician, lawyer, and music historian Saverio Mattei (1742-95), assuring him that "it could adapt to any psaltery of common tuning without having to drill new holes for the pegs" (Valdrighi, *Musurgiana*, 44-45).
- 60 In Valdrighi's words, "Happier and more sensible was the Spaniard Pla, who, by changing the position of just two bridges in the psaltery, and completely removing four of them, made it so comfortable that it was played with little effort in *fefaut*, *befà*, in *gesolreut* minor, etc." (*Musurgiana*, 40-41).

- Alberto Zanotelli has written, “It is appropriate to give due praise to the Spaniard Pla..., already a very talented psaltery player of the prince of Württemberg, who with only changing two bridges, made this instrument playable for almost all tones without much effort.” See note 95 in Alberto Zanotelli, ed. *Giambattista Dall’Olio: La Musica Poemetto* (2018), 25.
- 61 Valdrighi, *Musurgiana*, 55.
- 62 Dall’Olio learned philosophical sciences and music from Martini in Bologna and married Maddalena Callegari there as well. It was not until 1764 that he went to Rubiera, where he was a schoolteacher and organist for twenty years. See Luigi Cerretti, “Notizie Biografiche e Letterarie con Prose e Versi Mancanti nell’ Edizioni dell’ Autore,” in *Notizie Biografiche e Letterarie in Continuazioni della Biblioteca Modonese Del Cavalier Abate Girolamo Tiraboschi*, (Reggio Emilia: Tipografia Torreggiani e Compagno, 1833), 1:253–254.
- 63 Printed in Valdrighi, *Musurgiana*, 41–42. Chirico’s thoughts on this poem are worth including here: “It is evident that the author retraced the history of the instrument [psaltery] starting from its German origin, then probably alluding to the ‘poor German girl’ of Bonanni, to Jannesi, to Pla, and finally to the Roman abbot Fabrizio Pasquali and the Neapolitan knight Parisio, concluding with emphasis on the noble context in which the instrument was prided.” Chirico, “Il salterio in Italia,” 167.
- 64 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 15.
- 65 Schauer, “Das Personal des Württembergischen Hoftheaters,” 41.
- 66 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 15.
- 67 Rudolph Krauss, “Das Theater,” chapter 7 in *Herzog Karl Eugen von Württemberg und seine Zeit* (Paul Neff Verlag, 1907), 1:507–508. See also Rudolph Krauss, *Das Stuttgarter Hoftheater von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1908), 59; Schauer, “Das Personal des Württembergischen Hoftheaters,” 41; Josef Sittard, *Zur Geschichte der Musik und des Theaters am Württembergischen Hofe* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1891), 2:195; Klaus Hortschansky, “Handschriftliche Überlieferung von Instrumentalmusik am Stuttgarter Hof im 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Festschrift Christoph-Hellmut Mahling zum*
65. *Geburtstag* (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1997), 1:578; and Hermann Abert, *Niccolo Jommelli als Opernkomponist* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1908), 70.
- 68 Joseph Scherpereel, *A Orquestra e os Instrumentistas da Real Câmara de Lisboa de 1764 a 1834* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1985), 29, 97.
- 69 José Subirá, “Necrologías musicales madrileñas: Años 1611–1808,” *Anuario Musical* 13 (1958): 216.
- 70 *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2d ed., s.v. “Manuel Pla.”
- 71 See, for instance, Scherpereel, *A Orquestra e os Instrumentistas*, 29, 97–98. While some sources refer to Juan performing on the oboe and psaltery in Lisbon, others report only that he played the bassoon during his stay there. In the present author’s opinion, it is not unreasonable to assume that he played all three instruments from time to time while in Lisbon.
- 72 Dolcet, “Katalonische Oboenvirtuosen, 36. [“Wir haben zur Zeit keine Dokumente über sein Wirken in späterer Zeit.”]
- 73 Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 15. The theory that Juan traveled to the Netherlands after leaving Lisbon, which, to my knowledge has yet to be disproven, has been addressed in several studies.
- 74 See Kenyon de Pascual, *Dos Trios*, 13 n.4.
- 75 Dolcet, “L’obra dels germans Pla,” 131–88.
- 76 Concerning the Fmajor symphony ascribed to Manuel, see Bertil van Boer, “The Symphony on the Periphery,” in *The Eighteenth-Century Symphony*, vol. 1 of *The Symphonic Repertoire*, ed. A. Peter Brown, Mary Sue Morrow, and Bathia Churgin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 720.
- 77 Ana Lombardía, “Violin duets in Madrid: divertimento all’europa,” in *Instrumental Music in Late Eighteenth-Century Spain*, ed. M.A. Marin and M. Bernado (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2014), 69–116.
- 78 Dolcet, “L’obra dels germans Pla,” 131.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 132.
- 80 Bertil van Boer, review of “M. Pla *Salve Regina*. Pedro, cuánto has dejado. Regocijese el alma venturosa. Es tan sumo el amor. 3 coronas admite de nuestro cello. J. Pla *Stabat Mater*,” *Catalana Baroque*, Olivia Centurioni, LA MA DE GUIDO 2106, in *Fanfare* (September/October 2012): 308.