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Badal Pérez-Alarcón, Carles. *Performance practice in the 18th century at Santa Maria del Pi's music chapel choir in Barcelona, 2026*

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# Performance practice in the 18<sup>th</sup> century at Santa Maria del Pi's music chapel choir in Barcelona

## 1. The music chapel of *Santa Maria del Pi*

The music chapel of *Santa Maria del Pi* (SMPi) was one of the most important in Barcelona throughout its entire period of existence. Until the late 19th century, the city's public musical life was largely shaped by its many religious institutions. Among them, SMPi stood out as one of the most important parish churches, with the largest jurisdiction and one of the three most competitive music chapels—second only to that of Santa Maria del Mar and, at the cathedral level, the See of Barcelona. Notably, part of the significance of studying this institution lies in the broader gap in research on Spanish parish churches, which have generally received less scholarly attention than cathedrals. Since Nicholas Temperley's 1979 call for greater scholarly attention to what he termed the "local church",<sup>1</sup> musicological research in the parish context has advanced considerably. In Spain, for instance, this is clearly evidenced in two works by Victoriano Pérez Mancilla, which survey the numerous studies produced on this topic within the discipline between 1850 and 2018.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the attention devoted to cathedral institutions in Spain remains, to this day, significantly greater. Without in any way diminishing the value of these studies, it remains essential to continue researching and asserting the so-called local church as both a source of knowledge and a reflection of, in Temperley's words, "ordinary people".

But the fundamental distinctiveness of SMPi, compared to other institutions, lies in the degree of knowledge we can have about its entire history today. Unlike other ecclesiastical institutions in the city—except maybe for the Cathedral Chapter Archive—the Parish Archive of *Santa Maria del Pi* (APSMP) preserved its documentary series and collections almost entirely intact, even surviving the massive destruction of ecclesiastical art and documents that occurred in the city during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Today, it is possible to reconstruct the institution's history almost uninterruptedly from the 15th century to the present day.

In the musical sphere, it is also important to consider that reconstructing the activity of the music chapel of SMPi means reconstructing the musical experience of its parishioners and the broader community connected to the institution. A notable example of this connection between the parish and the local citizenry is the Baron of Maldà—an aristocrat with a passion for music and a chronicler of Barcelona during the transition from the 18th to the 19th century. In his extensive *Calaix de Sastre* volumes, he documented his private, public, and musical life, as well as his personal involvement in the musical life of both SMPi and the city.<sup>3</sup>

Before delving into the subject, it is necessary to clarify certain conceptual aspects. In contemporary Spanish scholarship, the term music chapel refers to the entire musical ensemble—both vocal and instrumental—within an ecclesiastical context. In this regard,

Oscar Mischiati defined the *cappella musicale* as “a group of singers and instrumentalists that under the direction of a maestro (who sometimes is also organist) serves a church in a permanent manner, from whose revenues they receive a regular stipend”.<sup>4</sup> However, in the documents from the period under study, the term was sometimes used imprecisely, referring variously to the vocal ensemble or choir alone, the vocal ensemble along with the chapel master and organist, or the full ensemble, including instrumentalists. This is not an isolated case specific to Santa Maria del Pi, but rather has been the norm, both in primary and secondary sources.<sup>5</sup> To avoid ambiguity, I use the term music chapel when referring to the complete ensemble and choir when referring exclusively to the vocal ensemble.

The documentation preserved in the APSMP clearly shows that the position of *mestre de cant* (literally, master of singing), although it existed earlier, developed throughout the 17th century with the professionalized character that would later define it. There are brief but explicit references to several competitions for this position held between 1634 and 1650.<sup>6</sup> However, it seems that it was not until October 19, 1670, that a formal agreement for the establishment of the music chapel was signed [Illus. 1].<sup>7</sup> The concord guaranteed six fixed-salary positions: chapel master or choirmaster—distinctions that were already beginning to blur at the time—an organist, and a choir of four singers. The instrumental ensemble was excluded from this document, which only aimed to establish a staff for musical composition and direction, organ music, and vocal polyphony. This document provided legal consistency to these six musical positions until the late 19th century.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to defining the ecclesiastical benefices and chaplaincies that would support these six positions, the agreement also established the method for obtaining them, which from that point on would be through a competitive process open to *persona i persones hàbils i pràctics en lo tocar l'orgue i de cant, que tinguen bona i sonora i acomodada veu* (qualified individuals proficient in playing the organ and in singing, possessing a good, resonant, and comfortable voice).<sup>9</sup>

Although here there is no reference to instrumental music or the institutionalization of an ensemble of instrumentalists, this should not lead to the conclusion that the parish of SMPi did not have those for its various polyphonic functions. Several documents indicate that a regular instrumental ensemble already existed at the beginning of the 18th century. In 1745, for example, a dispute with the chapel master of the *Palau de la Comtessa* of Barcelona, Bernat Tria, resulted in the signing of a new document aimed at organizing a joint music chapel between the parishes of SMPi and *Sant Just i Sant Pastor*.<sup>10</sup> The preamble of this agreement clearly outlines the situation that had been reached that year:

*Per quant molts anys a esta part se trobaven unides les capelles de cant de les iglésies parroquials de Nostra Senyora [...] del Pi, de Sant Just i Sant Pastor i de la capella del Palau de la Comtessa, totes de la present ciutat, fent totes tres capelles una sola. I amb esta unió i concòrdia havien sempre concorregut en to-*

*tes les funcions i siestes, no sols de les pròpies iglésies sinó també d'altres en què qualsevol de les tres fos estada cridada.*

For many years, the music chapels of the parish churches of *Nostra Senyora [...]* *del Pi*, of *Sant Just i Sant Pastor*, and of the chapel of the *Palau de la Comtessa*, all in this city, had been united, forming a single chapel. Through this union and agreement, they had always participated together in all functions and celebrations, not only in their own churches but also in others where any of the three had been called upon.<sup>11</sup>

The text only specifies «for many years». This, combined with the fact that the earlier agreement was only verbal, has made it impossible to determine its precise starting date. However, in the competition for chapel master at the parish in 1711, it is noted that

*Se donà refresc als [...] examinadors i a tots los cantors, músics de dita iglésia del Pi i de la capella del Palau [de la Comtessa] que sempre assistiren i cantaren i sonaren als exàmens.*

Refreshments were provided to the [...] examiners and to all the singers and musicians of the said church of *Santa Maria del Pi* and the chapel of the *Palau [de la Comtessa]*, who always attended, sang, and played at the examinations [Illus. 2].<sup>12</sup>

This confirms that, at least during the first half of the 18th century, the music chapels of SMPi and of *Palau de la Comtessa* maintained a regular collaboration, and therefore, this verbal agreement must have already been in effect. Regarding the duration of the agreement signed in 1745, its validity can be traced up until 1784, the year it was annulled by the *Obra* of SMPi (the lay organization that managed the music chapel) due to a conflict between the chapel masters of the two institutions.<sup>13</sup> In those final years of the 18th century, the instrumental ensemble experienced considerable instability, which would not recover until 1818.

Throughout this article, I will reference the various chapel masters who served at the parish during the 18th century and who, in some way, mark the different periods of the institution. By way of reference, I list the names of these musicians and their periods of service in parentheses: Benet Buscarons (1679–1711), Pau Llinàs (1709–1749),<sup>14</sup> Joan Baptista Vidal (1744–1769), Ramon Sunyer (1769–1782), Pere Joan Llonell (1782–1791), and Francesc Sampere (1791–1824). As can be seen, in the first three cases, there is an overlap of years, which is explained by the fact that the successor served as assistant to his predecessor.

One final point to clarify before delving into the subject matter is the vocabulary used concerning vocal parts and their translation from the original texts. The documentation preserved at the APSMP consistently refers to four types of singers according to their function

or range (with some orthographic variations, which I will set aside): *tipla* (treble), *contralt* (contralto), *tenor*, and *baix* (bass). Similarly, the manuscript music uses these same terms, except for the parts associated with the contraltos, which retain the older nomenclature of *alto*. Throughout the article, I will obviously refer to both the singers and the vocal parts. For the former, I will use their respective English translations: "soprano," "contralto," "tenor," and "bass." For the latter, I will use the indications I consider most common and widely used: S, A, T, B.

The aim of this article is, on the one hand, to explain the typical formal structure of the choir (vocal ensemble) at SMPi throughout the 18th century. On the other hand, it seeks to demonstrate the main hypothesis of the text, namely, that polyphonic singing in this parish was developed primarily, though with exceptions, using one voice per part, even considering the various vocal structures evidenced by the musical manuscripts preserved by the institution. The hypothesis concerning this practice at SMPi finds parallels in other European institutions across a broad period spanning the 16th to the 18th centuries. This is the case, for example, of the Papal Chapel in Rome, where it appears reasonable to affirm the consistent use of one singer per part throughout the period.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, ecclesiastical orchestras in Vienna followed this same practice, at least, during the 18th century,<sup>16</sup> as did the Spanish *Capilla Real* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Structure and layout of the choir

To be eligible for one of the six musical offices established in the concord of October 19, 1670, one had to be a priest or be able to be ordained within a year of appointment. From this group of musician-priests, the chapel master and the organist held two ecclesiastical benefices, while the singers occupied four chaplaincies. Both institutions provided financial income to their holders, though the latter were of lower rank and, for instance, did not grant voting rights in the *Comunitat de Preveres* (Community of Priests) residing—liturgically—in the parish. The funding of these benefices and chaplaincies was generally the responsibility of lay patrons. While lay patronage of the Catholic Church was typically a family and nobility tradition, in this case, it was managed by the *Junta de Patronat de la Capella de Música* (Patronage Board of the Music Chapel), an internal parish organization composed of four lay members from the three social estates serving on the *Junta d'Obra* (Parish Work Board),<sup>18</sup> four members of the *Administració dels Pobres Vergonyants* (Administration for the Shame-faced Poor)—a charitable corporation attached to the parish—and the rector. These nine individuals were also the ones who, ultimately, admitted the musicians to the chapel through their nine votes.<sup>19</sup>

Each singing chaplaincy, linked to a physical chapel or altar within the church, was associated with a specific voice type or *tessitura*. Although this association was not entirely fixed over time, it can be stated that two of these chaplaincies were linked to alto (A) and/or tenor (T) voices, while the other two were associated with bass (B) voices.<sup>20</sup>

The high voices (S) were sung by choirboys. At SMPi, there were four choirboys who were taught singing by the master. Two of these choirboys lived with him and were under his care, but the master was responsible for *ensenyar i amostrar de cant i de llegir als quatre escolanets* (teaching and instructing all four choirboys in singing and reading)<sup>21</sup> as well as *tenir compte en la pòlissa d'ells i que no fassen falta a la iglésia* (monitoring their behaviour and ensuring that they do not neglect their duties at the church).<sup>22</sup>

No document specifically details the degree of participation of the four choirboys in the choir. However, a considerable number of the works preserved at the institution include two or three vocal parts designated for soprano (S), and there is even one piece that includes four parts. This, on the one hand, implied the need to distribute the four choirboys in various ways—whether by rotating them through a single part or doubling some of the parts. On the other hand, the presence of these soprano parts underscores the importance of these treble voices in the institution's polyphonic music, and undoubtedly, in that period.

The choir of the music chapel at SMPi was like that of other prominent music chapels in the city, albeit with some particularities. Always adhering to the four-part structure—soprano (S), alto (A), tenor (T), and bass (B)—the ensemble initially included one adult voice for alto, one for tenor, two for bass, and between one to four treble voices for soprano. Given this initial number, it is possible that in works with one or two soprano parts, these voices were doubled.

Rather than being intended to double the part, the presence of two basses seems to have addressed the need to always have one available, anticipating the frequent absence of a singer. As evidenced by a petition from the late 18th century by the chapel master Francesc Sampere, one of the four singing chaplains—ordained priests—often had to be absent to officiate mass, as each member of the *Comunitat de Preveres* took turns. This left only three singers available in the chapel choir. Since there were already two bass singers, chapel master Sampere proposed hiring a permanent lay alto to compensate for these common absences [Illus. 3].<sup>23</sup>

This petition—which was ultimately accepted—, firstly, highlights that these four adult singer positions were the only ones available on a fixed and regular basis, as evidenced by the fact that the absence of just one singer, and therefore a complete vocal part, became a problem for the chapel master. Secondly, it demonstrates that the most critical positions were those for bass—of which there were two by default—and for alto, which Sampere proposed doubling. With this arrangement, the chapel would always have two altos, one tenor, and two basses, ensuring that even in the absence of one, there would always be some adult coverage for the outer vocal parts. In the absence of the single tenor, and in a context where vocal parts could still be more functional than strictly tessitura-based, it is conceivable that an alto could take over the tenor role in most cases.

For most of the 18th century, however, the music chapel consisted of the four adult voices mentioned above—without the fifth member added in the later period—and four

choirboys. This made for a total of eight performers distributed across the four parts, who were available daily for most events involving polyphonic singing. This situation provides a preliminary argument in support of the initial thesis of this article, namely that the choral polyphony at SMPi was generally sung with one voice per part and only doubling some of them in very particular situations.

However, during more solemn festivities, when additional voices were needed, it seems that the *Junta de Patronat* would hire one to four external lay singers.<sup>24</sup> In this regard, the same petition from chapel master Sampere previously mentioned pointed out that, for these festivities, the vocal ensemble typically included the four fixed chaplains along with four external lay singers. Sampere complained that two of these singers were elderly, and although he did not clarify whether they participated less or lacked sufficient ability, he noted that because of this, *dits oficis no poden fer-se amb lo lluïment corresponent <a> dites festivitats* (these services cannot be performed with the proper splendour for such festivities).<sup>25</sup> This petition and the issues caused by the aging of some external singers also make it clear that, although the four lay singers were not permanently employed as proper members of the group, they were always the same group of individuals.

All of this—without yet considering the aforementioned fifth singer—suggests that the goal was to always have at least three adult voices—ATB—and probably one or two treble voices (S). As said, among the adults, although there were four in the roster, three would always be available, with some flexibility to exchange parts as needed. Thus, there would be three adults singing consistently, with a fourth who could either sing, take a break in rotation (during longer, more physically demanding services), or officiate mass when required, not attending the choir. For the highest voice, the four choirboys could rotate individually or in pairs, maybe becoming the only voice systematically doubled. During the most solemn festivities, the three or four adult voices would be supplemented by one to four lay singers (depending on the piece), and there would be the possibility of assigning the four choirboys to two different choirs—two in each choir, again singing either individually or doubled. By maintaining the general rule of one voice per part, this ensemble would even be capable of performing the more complex works, such as one preserved piece at SMPi for twelve voices, with eight adults (divided into ATB) and four different soprano parts.

Beyond these general considerations, a combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of the repertoire from the period preserved in the parish will help generate more precise hypotheses regarding the use of voices and the distribution of singers according to the work.

### **3. Analysis of the repertoire: vocal template and voice distribution**

It is a well-known fact that chapel masters, when composing music for their own music chapels, would generally do so considering the available ensemble at the time. In other words, composers had to consider the number of musicians they had at their disposal (whether permanent or external) and their vocal and instrumental distribution in order to

determine the timbral arrangement of their works. Therefore, a study of the repertoire preserved at the institution should provide valuable information regarding both the timbral aspects of this repertoire and the singers who performed in the choir.<sup>26</sup> In this way, it should be possible to determine the number of instrumental performers most commonly available, the most used vocal parts in the chapel's polyphony, and how these parts were used compositionally. Setting aside the instrumental aspect, the study of the vocal parts, together with the information presented thus far, can offer valuable insight into the vocal ensemble of the institution.

In order to maintain consistency with the established relationship between repertoire and ensemble, the selection of works for the present analysis followed certain criteria. Firstly, and naturally, I have only considered works with vocal polyphony, excluding all purely instrumental works. Within this selection, I have only included those works for which the number of vocal parts is known, either because these parts are preserved or because the title mentions them. It should also be noted that part of the repertoire preserved at the institution was composed by musicians who never worked there and, therefore, it would be at least bold to infer the rationale behind their instrumental and vocal distribution. These compositions were not included in the analysis. Likewise, some works composed by chapel masters of the parish are preserved in other Catalan archives and institutions. In these cases, I have considered for analysis those works that, based on their dating, coincide with the period in which their composer worked at SMPi, assuming that they were composed with the music chapel's ensemble in mind. Consequently, the analysed works include those preserved at the APSMP and composed by chapel masters who served during the studied period, as well as those preserved outside the institution but authored by local chapel masters and consistent with their tenure at the parish.

This selection has yielded a total of 47 choral polyphonic works composed between the late 17th century and the entirety of the 18th century for the music chapel of SMPi. 4 of these works, by Benet Buscarons (chapel master from 1679 to 1711), are preserved in the *Biblioteca de Catalunya* (BNC), which holds part of the musical collection from Barcelona Cathedral. Additionally, 10 of the analysed works are from the Diocesan Archive of Girona (ADG), including seven works by Pau Llinàs (chapel master from 1711 to 1749), 2 by Ramon Sunyer (1769-1782), and one by Pere Joan Llonell (1782-1791). Although it is likely that these works are preserved outside SMPi for reasons unrelated to the activity of their composers, there are no hypotheses regarding their apparent dislocation. The remaining works (33) are preserved at the APSMP.

The following analysis focuses on three aspects of vocal composition. First, I will examine the distribution of musical works based on the number of vocal parts — as I will show, ranging from one to twelve. Second, I will analyse the vocal structure of the works, i.e., the specific distribution of voices across different ranges and the frequency with which these structures recur in the set. Finally, I will delve into this vocal distribution from a diachronic

perspective, analysing the compositions in four blocks: those composed in the last third of the 17th century — by Benet Buscarons — and those composed in the first, second, and last thirds of the 18th century. This final part of the analysis led me to exclude works where the number of parts is known (because they are mentioned in the title) but where their timbral distribution is not preserved (because the individual voice parts are missing). This explains a negligible gap of two works between one part of the study and the next.

As seen in Fig. 1, the vast majority of preserved works were composed for eight vocal parts (21 works, accounting for 44.7% of the total), followed by works with six (9 works), four (8), and five parts (5). With the available permanent performers, it would have been possible to meet the requirements for compositions for one, four, five, and six voices — in six cases with three sopranos — covering a total of 42.6% of the preserved works (20 out of 47). For the remaining 57.4%, which includes 3 works for six voices with a solo alto or tenor and 24 for seven or more voices, external singers would have been needed. Notably, of this second group, 77.8% consists of works for eight voices, establishing this clearly as the preferred and typical form for the composers who worked at the parish.

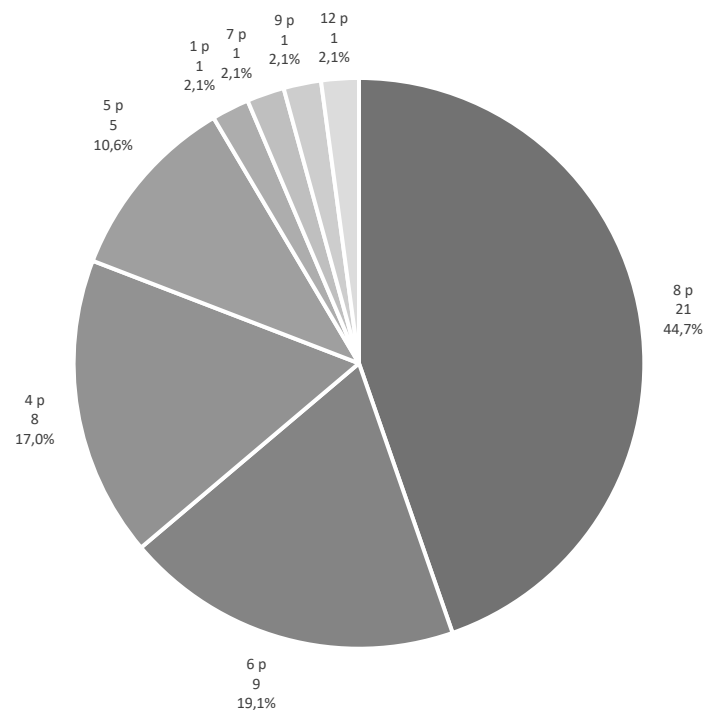


Figure 1: works composed for the music chapel of Santa Maria del Pi at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century and the whole 18<sup>th</sup> century by number of vocal parts, from a total of 47 works.

As I will detail below, this apparent variety of formulas conceals a basic and fixed structure of a four-part choir (SATB) with two possible extensions: a soloist (S, A, or T) or a second choir with two or four additional parts, the latter being the most common, i.e., two choirs of four parts each. Although a few examples deviate from this basic idea, more than 90% of the preserved works fit this scheme. Naturally, the four-part division of the vocal parts was already rooted in a long-standing tradition by the 18th century, and, therefore, the

information provided by the data in Fig. 1 regarding the use of vocal forces is of a relative importance. For this reason, it is necessary to study the specific distribution of the vocal parts, beyond their total number, in order to better understand their use at SMPi.

Fig. 2 presents an analysis of 45 of the 47 preserved scores from the APSMP, for which we know the vocal distribution. The first observation here is that the SATB structure appears in most compositions: in 12 of the 15 formulas identified, and in 39 of the 45 works analysed. In 12 of these pieces, this basic distribution is duplicated, appearing in both the first choir and the second choir. If we examine the vocal composition of this latter group, it becomes clear that this duplication was more aimed at reinforcing the parts of the first choir rather than providing a second choir with its own distinct musical identity. Therefore, this duplication of choirs concealed the possibility of performing the pieces, in the absence of additional personnel, with just a single four-part choir. In fact, 8 of the 21 compositions for eight voices—all of them by chapel master Pere Joan Llonell—explicitly suggest this dual possibility of performance in the manuscript itself, labelled *a 4. y a 8.* (for 4 and 8 voices) [Illus. 4].<sup>27</sup> This indicates that, at least during the last quarter of the century, having this option had become a normalized necessity. From my point of view, this compositional economy supports the hypothesis proposed above. On the one hand, it is unlikely that the composition for two choirs would be aimed at the reinforcement of the main parts if these were usually sung by more than one voice. On the other hand, the fact that the composer offered the possibility of performing a work with either four or eight voices also seems to indicate that a scarcity of personnel was the norm.

A second group of compositions for eight parts—7 in total—employs the SATB formula for the accompanying choir and SSAT for the first choir. This slightly different formula would require the use of at least three of the four choirboys available for the soprano parts. However, it is also possible that two of them sang in the accompanying choir—doubling the soprano part—while the other two filled the two soprano parts of the first choir. Given the said accompanying role of the SATB choir, it would also be possible to perform this work with just four parts from the first SSAT choir, as both S in this choir share soloist and choral sections. Similarly, although the bass part (B) of the accompanying choir would fall outside this scheme, it could either be incorporated into the first choir (SSAT)—creating a total of five parts for the piece—or omitted entirely, as its melodic line was often identical, note for note, to that of the bass accompaniment (figured or not).<sup>28</sup> This is also probably indicative of the difficulty in finding and/or retaining bass singers at the chapel. This shortage must have been so common that the bass voice parts often included only the incipit of their text, without completing it, likely indicating that this part would often be performed by a *bajón* (dulcian), or—later—a bassoon rather than a bass singer.

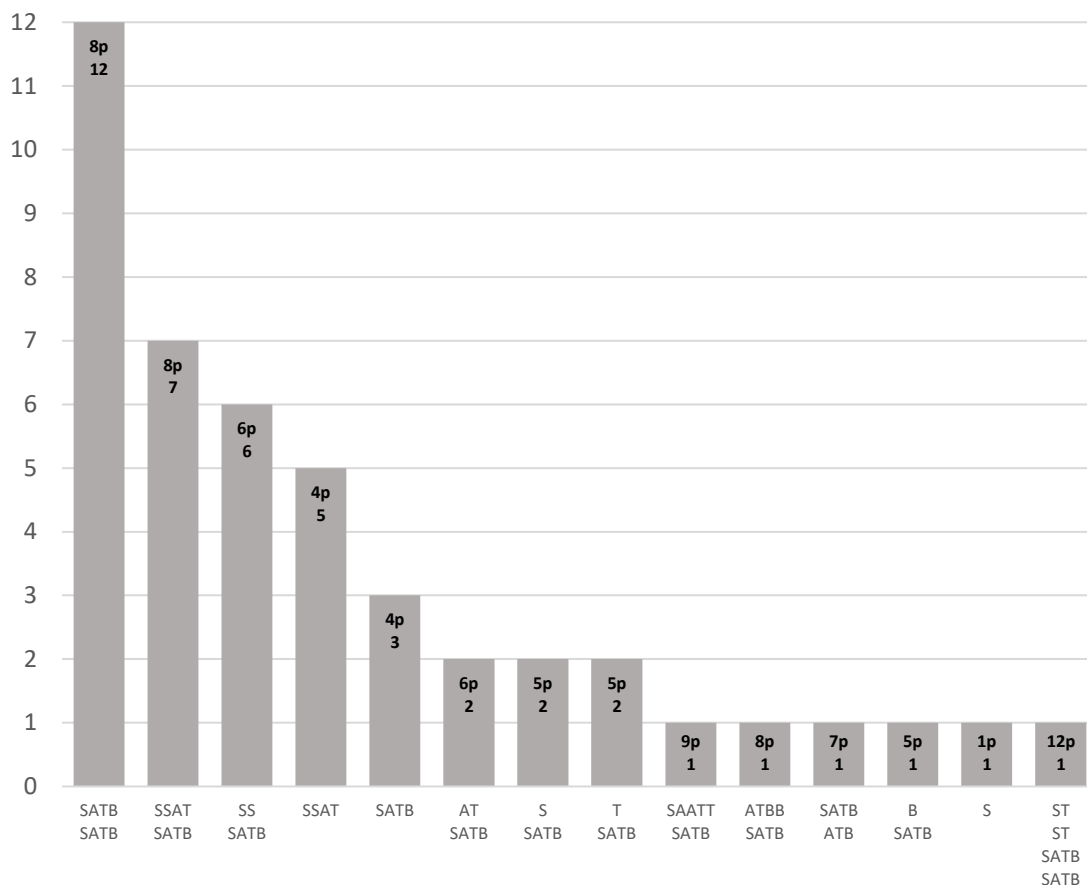


Figure 2: works in Santa Maria del Pi from 18th century by vocal structure, from a total of 45 with known vocal parts.

Regarding the possibility of adapting and converting existing works to meet contextual needs in this latter manner, there is, for example, a considerable number of works from this period composed directly for four and six vocal parts, with and without bass—SSAT (5 works), S-SATB (2 works), SS-SATB (6 works). In these compositions, the potential absence of the bass and the variability of the soprano parts (the only voice for which four performers were consistently available) clearly highlight the scope for manoeuvre available at SMPi's music chapel. In a context of regular polyphonic liturgy fixed throughout the year, it would have been essential to remain agile and adaptable in the face of highly probable unforeseen circumstances—such as absences, illnesses, or temporary shortages.

The prominence of compositions for four and eight parts within the analysed corpus increases when viewed through a diachronic analysis of this set of pieces (see Fig. 3). When visualized in this manner, it becomes clear that, except for 3 works for seven, nine, and twelve parts respectively—all of which are evident exceptions within the set (see Fig. 2)—the formula for eight vocal parts appears consistently throughout the period. Moreover, this formula remains most prevalent during the periods with the highest number of works attributed, suggesting that its predominance persisted over time.

Although somewhat inconsistently during the period 1666–1733, a comparable pattern is discernible in the works scored for four and five parts.<sup>29</sup> It can therefore be said that compositions for four, five, and eight parts were common practice throughout the 18th century, with a clear preference for the latter format. Pieces for six vocal parts, on the other hand, although also numerous in general terms, seem to have experienced a more concentrated use in the central period of the 18th century — perhaps due to the chapel’s circumstantial needs — with no preserved evidence from earlier periods and almost disappearing at the end of the century.

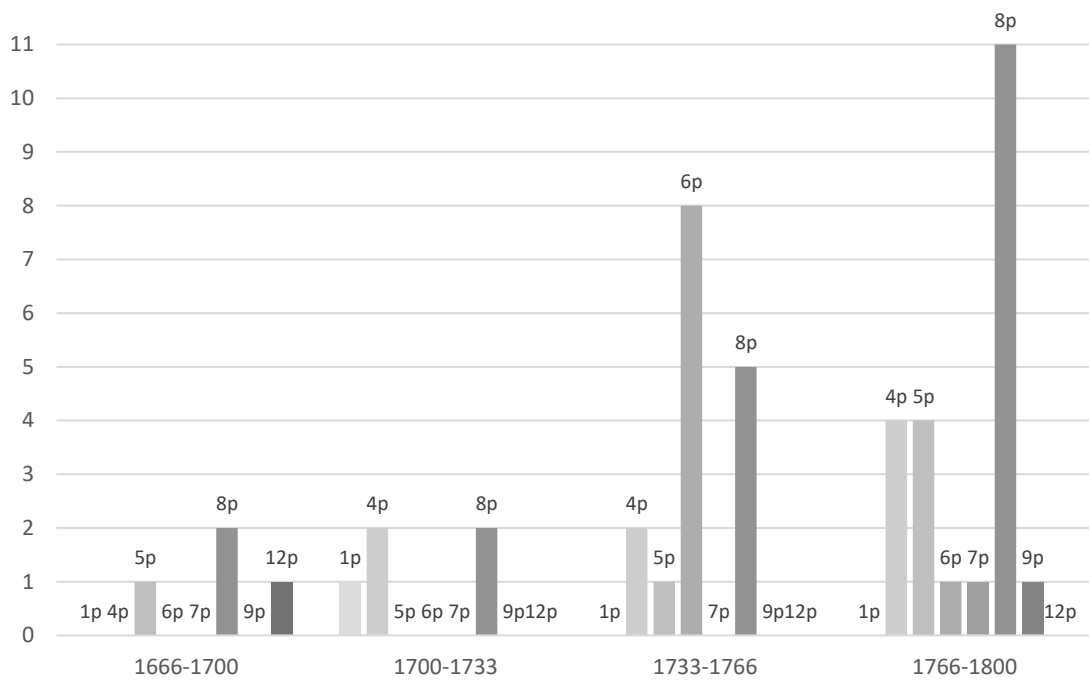


Figure 3: number of works by vocal parts distributed through time.

Finally, it is also noteworthy that 6 out of the 9 works composed for six voices contain three parts for S (one in the second choir and two in the first choir). This particularity could indicate, as mentioned above, that by the mid-18th century, there were several choirboys of considerable skill available. Furthermore, 7 compositions for four parts, 3 for five, and 7 for eight (17 in total) also contain three parts for S, and these belong to other moments within the studied period. All of this seems to suggest that throughout the 18th century, the music chapel of SMPi was demanding of its choirboys. The treble voices became a central element of polyphonic singing in the parish, and particularly in the mid-century, it seems reasonable to assert that the chapel of SMPi had at least one, maybe two, exceptionally skilled choirboys.

#### 4. Conclusions

The music chapel of SMPi is an example of the various musical chapels known to have existed in Barcelona. During the studied period, this chapel was no exception, and although it

was quite important, it was not the most significant in that context. Among the numerous ecclesiastical institutions in the city, four enjoyed musical prominence during the 18th century. The music chapel of the Cathedral in Barcelona always held the top position, followed by that of *Santa Maria del Mar*, then the chapel of the *Palau de la Comtessa*, and finally, the chapel of SMPi. This was a natural hierarchy—though perhaps not the best term—and was imposed by three factors that acted simultaneously: ecclesiastical hierarchy, economic capacity, and the quality and quantity of their musicians.

Beyond these comparative discussions that do not belong in this article, it's undeniable that SMPi possesses a unique degree of documentary richness among these institutions, with the possible and only exception of the cathedral chapter. As the various parish institutions shared a comparable management system based on benefits and ecclesiastical chaplaincies of lay patronage this high degree of documentary richness, in addition to promoting knowledge of the institution itself, can also be of great help for the study of other parish institutions for which we do not possess as much or any documentation (such are the cases of the parish of *Sant Just i Sant Pastor* or that of *Santa Maria del Mar*, indeed the most important parish institution in the city of the time).

To summarize, the signing of the concord of 1670 institutionalized the core of the music chapel at the parish of SMPi, which, although it had existed prior to this document, did not possess its own bureaucratic entity. Now, the six musicians would perform a musical role that was added to their tasks as priests, but this role was granted to them through a competitive process, rather than by community voting like the other internal tasks (archivist, infirmarian, etc.). Ideally, the singers occupied three of the four vocal parts—one alto, one tenor, and two basses—leaving the highest range (soprano) for the four choirboys whom the institution hosted and trained in various aspects.

As I have aimed to demonstrate throughout this text, the institution's resource economy and the demands of a considerably intense liturgical routine and a vibrant parish life led to a musical composition characterized by flexible and versatile structures. The analysis of the administrative documentation of SMPi, combined with the study of the vocal works preserved there, reveals a medium-sized musical institution that maximized the use of the eight individuals of its vocal ensemble, four of which were choirboys. The basic structure (SATB) was occasionally expanded for special occasions with a second choir of up to four external singers. This type of polychorality, which by the second half of the Spanish eighteenth century was already considered retrograde and opposed to *las nuevas categorías del gusto y de la sencillez natural* (the new categories of taste and natural simplicity)<sup>30</sup>, was often used to enhance the three existing adult vocal parts, relegating aesthetic resources more typical of earlier periods to a secondary role. This pragmatic and utilitarian tendency crystallizes and becomes apparent in the works of Pere Joan Llonell in the last quarter of the century, who explicitly composed his music for 4 or 8 parts.

Although the composition of the period fundamentally revolved around the traditional basic vocal structure, it is also noteworthy that the treble voices enjoyed considerable prominence, with formulas that granted them clear leading roles (S-SATB, SS-SATB, SSAT, or SSAT-SATB). As I have noted above, while this was important throughout the century, it was particularly significant in the mid-period.

Delving deeper into the study of the aspects presented in this article offers, on the one hand, more tools for performing 18th-century music and allows for more informed aesthetic decisions. On the other hand, this study can also provide insight into the extent to which aesthetic aspects were or were not present in the various decisions that affected this music in its context of origin, from composition to final performance.

## 5. Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Temperley, Nicholas, *The Music of the English parish church*. 1979; Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 1, cited in Gembero Ustároz, María. 'El Patronazgo Ciudadano En La Gestión de La Música Eclesiástica: La Parroquia de San Nicolás de Pamplona (1700-1800)'. *Nassarre. Revista Aragonesa de Musicología* XIV, no. 1 (1998), p. 269.
- <sup>2</sup> Pérez Mancilla, Victoriano: "Historiografía musical de las parroquias en España: estado de la cuestión". *Anuario Musical*, n.º 68 (2013), pp. 47-80, and Pérez Mancilla, Victoriano: "La actividad musical en las parroquias españolas durante el siglo XVIII claves para profundizar en su estudio". En *Musicología en el siglo XXI: nuevos retos, nuevos enfoques*, ed. Begoña Lolo y Adela Presas (Madrid, 2018), pp. 319-32.
- <sup>3</sup> Lluís Bertran, in his doctoral thesis, explores, among other topics, the relationship between the musical activity of Barcelona's parish churches—paying particular attention to Santa Maria del Pi—and the city's civil and social life. This study is based, specifically, on a thorough analysis of the work of the Baró de Maldà. The complete works of the Baró—which cover the period from 1769 to 1819—can currently be consulted in person at the Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya or accessed digitally at the following link: <https://mdc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/calaixSastre/>. See also Chapter 6 of Bertran Xirau, Lluís, *Musique en lieu: une topographie de l'expérience musicale à Barcelone et sur son territoire (1760–1808)* (PhD diss., Université de Poitiers, 2017), pp. 181–232, available at <https://theses.hal.science/tel-04075232>.
- <sup>4</sup> Mischiati, Oscar. 'Profilo storico della cappella musical e', in *Musica sacra in Sicilia*, ed. D. Ficola, p. 24, cited in Marín, Miguel Ángel. 'Jaca and Its "Sound-scape"', in *Music on the Margin. Urban Musical Life in Eighteenth-Century Jaca (Spain)* (Kassel, 2002), p. 48.
- <sup>5</sup> Marín, Miguel Ángel. 'Jaca and Its "Soundscape"....', p. 56.
- <sup>6</sup> Arxiu Parroquial de Santa Maria del Pi (APSMP): B362 *Determinacions "I"*, f. 136r (26-IV-1679). Although it is a later document, these records—concerning the appointment of chapel master Benet Buscarons—contain explicit references to several examinations held for the position of chapel master between 1634 and 1650.
- <sup>7</sup> APSMP: B294 *Llibre Negre de l'Obra* (LLN), p. 865 (19-X-1670) [Illustration 1].
- <sup>8</sup> The concord of 1670 is mentioned at the beginning of the decrees published for the examinations of any of these six positions. The last decree that explicitly references it dates to March 20, 1863, for the position of chapel master (APSMP: C540 *Col·lecció de Música Baldelló* (from now on, CdMB), 015.00b).
- <sup>9</sup> APSMP: C540 CdMB, 005.04, f. 3v (4-VII-1671).
- <sup>10</sup> APSMP: B286, *Llibre Primer de Acuerdos* 1693-1748, f. 467r-475r (25-VII-1745).
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 468r.
- <sup>12</sup> APSMP: B294 LLN, p. 424 (2-IX-1711) [Illustration 2].
- <sup>13</sup> Badal Pérez-Alarcón, Carles "'Pel Major Lluïment Del Culte". *La Capella de Música de Santa Maria Del Pi de Barcelona Des d'una Anàlisi Documental (1700-1936)*, (PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2023), pp. 533–39.
- <sup>14</sup> A critical edition of two of Pau Llinàs' Works has been edited and published by Ficta Edicions (see Badal Pérez-Alarcón, Carles. *Pau Llinàs (ca.1680-1749). Magnificat, per a 5 Veus i Acompanyament. Missa, per a 6 Veus i Acompanyament*, (Vilablareix, 2017).
- <sup>15</sup> For 16th and 18th centuries see Sherr, Richard. 'Performance Practice in the Papal Chapel during the 16th Century'. *Early Music* 15, no. 4 (1987), pp. 456–60, <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/XV.4.453>, for 17th century see Lionnet, Jean. 'Performance Practice in the Papal Chapel during the 17th Century'. *Early Music* 15, no. 1 (1987), pp. 5–11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/XV.1.3>. It is worth noting that Sherr considers there to be reasonable doubt regarding the use of one singer per part in the institution during the 17th century, although not during the 16th and 18th.
- <sup>16</sup> Edge, Dexter. 'Mozart's Viennese Orchestras'. *Early Music* 20, no. 1 (1992), p. 68. <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/XX.1.64>.
- <sup>17</sup> Robledo, Luis, 'La capilla real en el reinado de Felipe II', in *III Semana de música española: el Renacimiento* (Madrid, 1988), pp. 249–62; and Robledo, Luis. 'Questions of Performance Practice in Philip III's Chapel'. *Early Music* 22, no. 2 (1994), pp. 203-15, <https://doi.org/10.1093/earlyj/XXII.2.198>. It should also be noted that other Iberian institutions, such as the Cathedral of Évora in Portugal, appear to have regularly employed doubled vocal parts, at least during the 16th century (see D'Alvarenga, João Pedro. 'On Performing Practices in Mid- to Late 16th-Century Portuguese Church Music: The Cappella of Évora Cathedral'. *Early Music* 43, no. 1 (2015), pp. 6-7, <https://doi.org/10.1093/em/cau135>).

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<sup>18</sup> María Gembero-Ustárroz compares this *Junta d'Obra* (or *Obrería* in Pamplona, Spain) to the vestries commonly found in English parish churches, as defined by Nicholas Temperley. See Gembero Ustárroz, María. 'El Patronazgo Ciudadano...', p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> Badal Pérez-Alarcón, 221–26.

<sup>20</sup> Badal Pérez-Alarcón, 223.

<sup>21</sup> APMS: C540 CdMB, 001.11, f. 1r (s. d.).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> APSMP: C541 CdMB, 040.01 (1798) [Illustration 3].

<sup>24</sup> The inclusion of external musicians for specific feast days was always a common practice within the context of ecclesiastical music chapels across various territories. At the Church of San Petronio in Bologna, for instance, "pay records from 1722 show that 141 musicians in all (singers and instrumentalists) participated in this event—34 on the regular payroll, 107 engaged for the occasion" and "as in Bologna, [at St. Mark's in Venice] the orchestra was enlarged by hiring freelancers for special occasions" (see Spitzer, John, and Neal Zaslaw. *The Birth of the Orchestra: History of an Institution, 1650-1815* (Oxford, 2004), p. 164. In the Spanish case, José Máximo Leza mentions that available musicians were often expanded through external reinforcements (see Máximo Leza, José. 'El Siglo XVIII: Historia, Instituciones, Discursos'. In *Historia de La Música En España e Hispanoamérica. Volumen 4. La Música En El Siglo XVIII*, ed. José Máximo Leza (Madrid, 2014), p. 53. In Pamplona, for example, the needs of its numerous parishes and convents—many of which lacked their own instrumentalists—could be met by hiring the Cathedral's full music chapel for the most solemn feast days (see Gembero Ustárroz, María. 'El Patronazgo Ciudadano...' (1998), p. 277). Although these examples pertain to the incorporation of instrumentalists—a practice also common at Santa Maria del Pi (see Badal Pérez-Alarcón, Carles. "'Pel Major Lluïment Del Culte'...", pp. 525-27) —, the incorporation of external singers by the same means is unquestionable, given the small number of fixed singers and the large vocal ensemble required by many of its musical works, which often called for two or three choirs.

<sup>25</sup> APSMP: C541 CdMB, 040.01 (1798) [Illustration 3].

<sup>26</sup> I agree with José Máximo Leza when he states that *las partituras compuestas por los maestros para una determinada capilla pueden aproximarnos a los orgánicos reales utilizados en ocasiones concretas* (the scores composed by chapel masters for a given institution can provide insight into the actual performing forces employed on specific occasions). See Máximo Leza, José. 'El Siglo XVIII: Historia, Instituciones, Discursos'..., p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> See APSMP following records: C314.0026, C322.0283, C322.0285 [Illustration 4], C323.0298.01, C329.0443, C333.0481, C356.0814, C384.1121, C388.1273. Although within the selected set of works this device appears only in the case of Pere Joan Llonell, the archive also preserves works by other authors left aside for this research that adopt the same structural approach (see C322.0280 [1791], C322.0281 [1791], C355.0805 [1819], C356.0806 [1818], C385.1135 [1800]). The chronology of these works further indicates that this was a practice that extended into the 19th century. It is also worth emphasizing that this device was widely employed throughout Catalonia, not only in parish institutions but also in cathedrals such as those of Girona, Tarragona, and Terrassa. A search of the online catalogue of the [Inventari dels Fons Musicals de Catalunya](#)—a project for the cataloguing of musical manuscripts undertaken by the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (UAB)—[returns 192 works preserved in Catalan parishes, basilicas, and cathedrals](#)—from a list of 15,573 of all periods in time—whose formal titles present this same dual structure.

<sup>28</sup> This use of the bass part played instrumentally was very common in many Spanish ecclesiastical institutions. Its use was so widespread and significant, especially when played with the *bajón*, that the player of the instrument often attained a higher status than other members of the same ensemble, at times even receiving a salary comparable to that of the chapel master (see Máximo Leza, José. 'El Siglo XVIII: Historia, Instituciones, Discursos'..., p. 53). At SMPi, for example, the *bajón* player was the only non-priest instrumentalist to receive the privilege of ecclesiastical distributions—a form of financial remuneration typically reserved for the benefited clergy of the institution (see Badal Pérez-Alarcón, Carles. "'Pel Major Lluïment Del Culte'...", pp. 607-10).

<sup>29</sup> Despite this initial irregularity, both forms subsequently appear to be fairly common. The initial lack of examples may also result from the general scarcity of sources from that period. Considering the institution's fixed ensemble of musicians, it is reasonable to assume that this format—featuring four simple choral parts and a strictly solo voice—was also a regularly employed resource.

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<sup>30</sup> Carreras, Juan José. 'La Policoralidad Como Identidad Del "Barroco Musical Español"', in *Polychoralities: Music, Identity and Power in Italy, Spain and the New World*, ed. Juan José Carreras and Iain Fenlon (Kassel, 2013), p. 115.