Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME XLVI • 2020

The Pérez de Lara Family, Mexican Organ and Piano Builders

Edward Charles Pepe

In early 2010 I learned of a square piano (fig. 1) in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society in Tucson, which was said to bear an inscription stating it was built in 1823 in Mexico City by "Pérez de Zarda."[1] Being aware of a Pérez de *Lara* family of organ builders working in Mexico City around 1800, and knowing that organ building was closely related historically to stringed keyboard construction, I suspected the name "Zarda" was a misreading. In 2013 I wrote to the Arizona Historical Society to inquire about the instrument. Photos confirmed that the painted label (fig. 2) reads "Pérez de Lara/ me hizo, en Mejico / N. 9. año de 1823" (Pérez de Lara / made me, in Mexico [City] / No. 9, [in the] year 1823).[2] Although contemporary documents mention piano construction in Mexico City in the 1820s and earlier, the Tucson piano is the first and so far the only instrument to have surfaced, claiming construction in that time and place. It is also the only surviving piano bearing the name Pérez de Lara.[3] Indeed,

1. I would like to thank Jimena Palacios Uribe for putting me in touch with Albert R. Rice, who informed me of the Tucson Pérez de Lara piano. In May 2017 Laurence Libin met me in Tucson to document the instrument. In September 2018 we presented lectures on the subject as part of the Cátedra de Organología Hispanoamericana series sponsored by the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades and Dirección de Patrimonio Histórico Universitario of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, the Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, and the Posgrado en Música of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. This article is an updated version of my portion of that presentation. Libin's talk dealt with technical details of the piano. A printed version of both lectures, as well as a copy of measurements and photographs taken were presented to the Arizona Historical Society for their records.

2. The instrument was transferred to the Arizona Historical Society in 1989 from the San Diego [California] Historical Society, whose records state that the piano had been donated to them in 1965 by a Mildred H. Johnson. She had received it as a gift from an anonymous friend who reportedly purchased it in Mexico. Further information on the instrument's history is anecdotal and difficult to substantiate. The story recorded in 1965 that the instrument had been thrown out of a convent window during the Mexican Revolution, for example, is doubtful however colorful, since the instrument shows no evidence of the kind of damage this would have caused. Indeed, it is not impossible that the Pérez de Lara piano came to California (then Alta California and part of recently independent Mexico) around the time of its construction.

3. There is also the possibility that the instrument was not actually constructed in Mexico City, but only relabeled there. But it's not clear what reasons there would be for such

FIGURE 1. Pérez de Lara piano in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society in Tucson, Arizona. Photograph by Edward C. Pepe.

FIGURE 2. Painted label of the Pérez de Lara piano of the Arizona Historical Society in Tucson, Arizona. Photograph by Edward C. Pepe.

the instrument offers some fascinating insights into the construction of pianos in New Spain and early independent Mexico—a subject that only recently has begun to receive the attention it deserves.[4] In this article I establish a genealogy of the Pérez de Lara organ-building family, consolidating information about their work as organ builders with the hope that this will assist in the investigation of their piano-building activities. I also present archival evidence of the family's relationship with pianos.

The Pérez de Lara Family of Organ Builders

Although not as prolific as the well-known Castro family of organ builders from the Mexican State of Puebla,[5] and with far fewer surviving instruments, the Pérez de Lara family was nevertheless famous in its day. The family maintained the organs of Mexico City Cathedral (Catedral Metropolitana de México) from 1797 to 1850 and installed new organs in numerous churches in the Mexican capital. The clan consisted of at least five organ builders, representing at least three generations. The principal protagonists were its founder, Mariano Antonio, his son, José Joaquín, and his grandson (José Joaquín's son), Francisco, although Francisco's brothers Manuel and José Joaquín (Jr.) may also have played some role. Other possible members of the family were a Manuel Pérez, builder of organs and stringed keyboard instruments, and combinations of the two, who opened a workshop on Calle Monterilla, Mexico City, in 1796,[6] and a José Mariano Pérez, who built an organ in 1791 for the Convent of San Diego in Mexico City.[7] Whether or not he was a member of the

a relabeling. An imported English piano would surely sell for more, and Laurence Libin is of the opinion that its construction is not as refined as one would expect in an instrument made in London, for example. Wood analysis would help to settle the question of country of origin. But without further information one way or the other, the preponderance of evidence suggests a Mexican piano made by a well-known organ-building dynasty.

4. See for instance Yael Bitrán Goren's "Musical Women and Identity Building in Early Independent Mexico (1821–1854)" (PhD diss., University of London, 2012).

5. Gustavo Mauleón and Josué Gastellou, *Catálogo de órganos tubulares históricos del Estado de Puebla* (Puebla: Universidad Iberoamericana Golfo Centro, 1997), passim. In production numbers the Pérez de Lara family is closer to the Suárez in Hidalgo.

6. Gabriel Saldívar, *Historia de la música en México* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1934), 193.

7. Efraín Castro Morales, *Los órganos en la Nueva España y sus artífices* (Puebla: Gobierno del Estado de Puebla, 1989), 44.

family, Manuel Pérez confirms—as Tiburcio Sanz, Félix Yzaguirre, and Juan Felipe de Olea[8] had already established—both that New Spanish builders sometimes supplemented the construction of organs with that of stringed keyboard instruments and that pianos were being sold and even constructed in Mexico City by at least the end of the eighteenth century. As yet, there is no evidence linking this family to any builders of stringed keyboard instruments in Spain.

Although the contribution of the Pérez de Lara family to Mexican organ building has been acknowledged for years, the extent and importance of their work has not been recognized.[9] This is due, at least in part, to the scarcity of surviving organs, one of which—the iconic Mexican organ in San Martín Texmelucan (Puebla)—is only now in this study being formally attributed to Mariano. Furthermore, the half division (just in the treble) added by Mariano to the Nassarre Gospel organ in Mexico City Cathedral[10] has often been viewed as an unfortunate modification to the original organ, with some even misguidedly calling for its removal in the most recent restoration. Just two of the family's organs (and the fourth division of the Mexico City Cathedral organ just mentioned) are in playable condition: the one in Texmelucan and that at Vizcaínas College in Mexico City.

8. Edward C. Pepe, "The Museo de Historia—Chapultepec Castle Clavichord and the Likely Identification of its Builder, Juan Felipe de Olea," in *De clavicordio XI: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Clavichord Symposium, Magnano, 2013*, ed. Bernard Brauchli, Judith Wardman, and Alberto Galazzo (Magnano: Musica Antica a Magnano, 2014), 157.

9. The family was mentioned only briefly in Castro Morales' seminal study of organ building in New Spain and independent Mexico (*Los órganos*, 44). Prior to notice of a piano bearing the name now in Arizona, the Pérez de Lara name had surfaced in three places: first, on a label glued by José Joaquín (Sr.) to the main wind chest of the gospel organ in Mexico City Cathedral after he renovated the organ in 1817; see Dirk Flentrop, *The Organs of Mexico City Cathedral* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press,1986), 3; second, on a label placed on the wind chest of the organ built by Francisco in 1834 for the chapel of El Colegio de las Vizcaínas in the historic center of Mexico City; and, third, in a proposal for a small organ drafted in June 1820 by José Joaquín, Sr.; Saldívar, *Historia de la musica*, 191–3.

10. Joseph Francisco Nassarre Cimorra (1701–1737), a native of Zaragoza in Spain working in New Spain, built a pair of largely identical organs for Mexico City Cathedral in the years 1734–36. Because one of the two organs reincorporated elements of an older organ built by Jorge de Sesma in Madrid in 1689, it is sometimes referred to as "the Jorge de Sesma organ." Nassarre's two organs were the largest organ-building project ever undertaken in viceregal Mexico. They survive today in a relatively good state of preservation. They were restored in the 1970s by Flentrop Orgelbauw and were recently (re)-restored by Gerhard Grenzing.

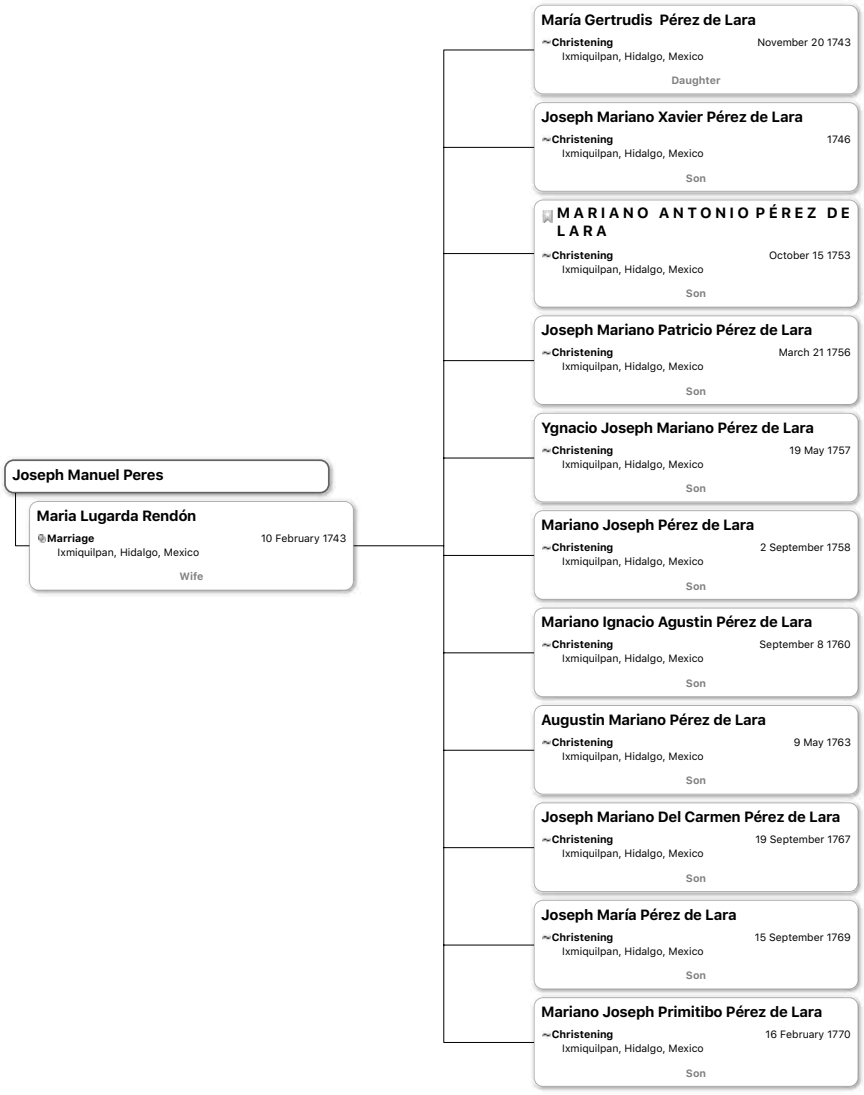

FIGURE 3. Pérez de Lara Genealogy I: Joseph Manuel Peres.

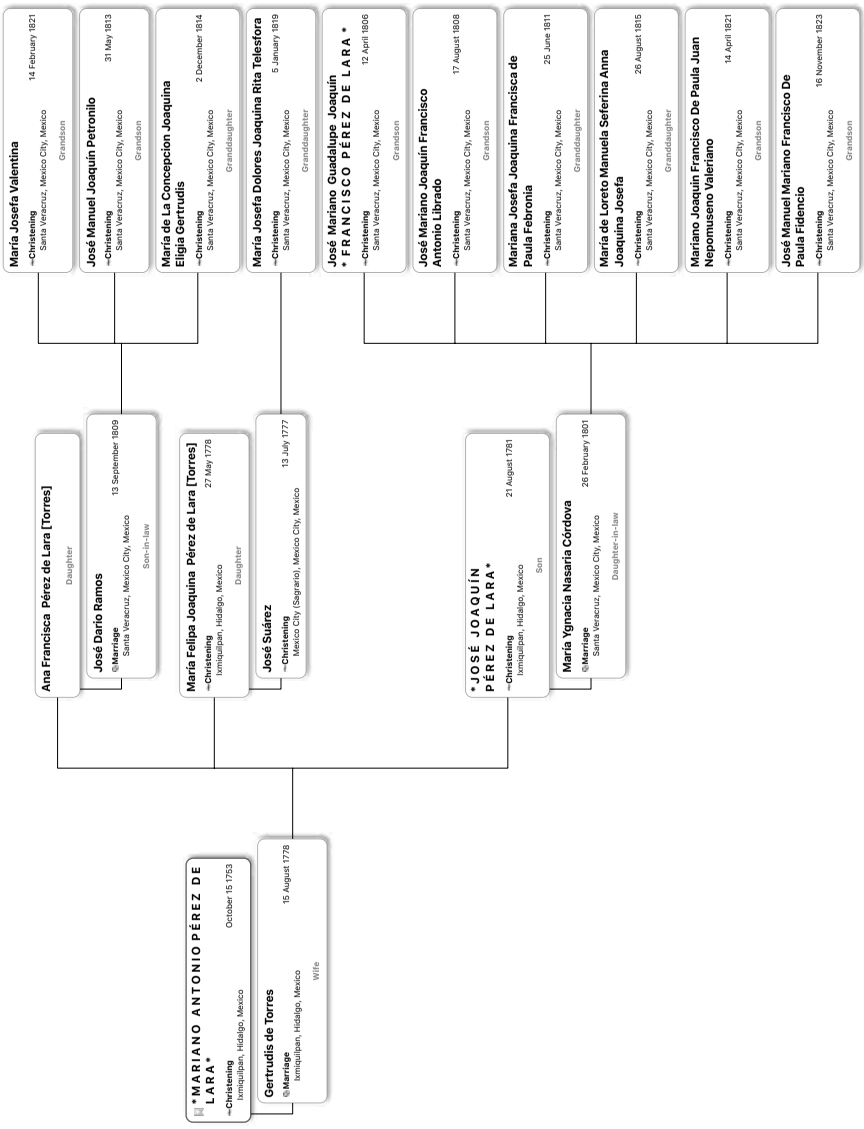

FIGURE 4. Pérez de Lara Genealogy II: Mariano Antonio Pérez de Lara.

Mariano was one of at least eleven children of Juan Manuel Pérez[11] and Maria Lugarda Rendón (also Rondón), who were married on February 10, 1743, in San Miguel Arcángel parish in Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo. Mariano was baptized on October 15, 1753, in the same parish.[12]

Although not appearing either in Mariano's birth register (his father appears as Joseph Manuel Pérez and his mother as María Lugarda Rendón) or in his marriage register, the second surname "De Lara" was likely that of one of his parents (probably the father), since Mariano and his siblings often went by "Pérez de Lara," though they sometimes appear as either "Pérez" or "Lara."[13] José Joaquín and his sons continued to call themselves "Pérez de Lara," perhaps for professional reasons.

Mariano wed Gertrudis (Antonia) de Torres, also from Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo, on August 15, 1778. Their first child, a daughter María Felipa Joaquína, was baptized in the parish of San Miguel Arcángel on May 27, 1778 (before the wedding); their son, José Joaquín, the organ builder, was baptized on August 21, 1781. In spite of having deep roots there, the family abandoned Ixmiquilpan and adopted the parish of La Santa Veracruz in Mexico City after Mariano was appointed organ technician at Mexico City Cathedral in 1797 (see below). The Santa Veracruz church is not far from where Mariano maintained a workshop, in the basement of the San Hipólito hospital[14] on the edge of town or from the house (sometimes referred to as a *finca* or "country estate") he owned across the street in the

11. If still alive, Mariano's father would have been around 70 years old in 1796 and likely too old to open the Calle Monterilla shop.

12. Baptismal records of the time vary but usually record a child's given (Christian) names but not its family names; the Christian names (usually just one or two but sometimes as many as eight or nine) and family names (either one or two) of the father and mother; usually the name(s) of the godparent(s); the name of the person who officiated; the date and the place. Later in life, people used just one or two of their baptismal names (usually the one that most easily distinguished them from their siblings). All the baptisms and marriages referenced here can be found in the sacramental records of the parishes of either San Miguel Arcángel in Ixmiquilpan, or La Santa Vera Cruz or the Sagrario of Mexico City Cathedral, and for the sake of brevity they are not cited individually or quoted.

13. Today, Spanish surnames consist of two parts: the first is the paternal (first) family name of the father and the second is the paternal family name of the mother. This was not the case historically, when there was much more flexibility, including using one family name from one of the parents, both family names of one parent and none from the other, two family names from one parent and one or two from the other, or a number of other combinations. It is also important to note that women did not change their name after marrying. Mariano sometimes appears in Mexico City Cathedral payment records as Mariano Lara and signs his name as Lara.

14. Castro Morales, *Los órganos*, 44

Arcos de la Agua.[15]

José Joaquín married María Ygnacia Nasaria Córdova on February 26, 1801, in the parish of La Santa Veracruz, where they would baptize numerous children including three—Francisco (baptized on April 12, 1806), Manuel, and José Joaquín—who would become organ builders. Even fewer details of their personal lives are known than those concerning Mariano.

The Pérez de Laras as Maintenance Technicians for Mexico City Cathedral's Organs

Mariano was appointed tuner/organ technician for Mexico City Cathedral in 1797.[16] The position was a prestigious one that was always held by the viceroyalty's most important builders and Mariano served until his death on April 5, 1816. He was the first of Mexico City Cathedral's organ technicians—and happily (from a modern perspective) also the last—to make significant and identifiable modifications to the Nassarre organs. Reflecting a change of taste that had set in by 1800, among these modifications were the inclusion of more registers of fundamental tone (here including the addition of a manual Principal 16' and the substitution of an unspecified register by a two-ranked Transverse Flute 8'). Mariano later also added the already-mentioned fourth division with a corresponding half manual (in the treble beginning with middle c, i.e. c´ in the Helmholtz system used in this article), a gesture constituting an important move beyond the boundaries of the classic Spanish organ that had provided for solo playing *on the same manual as the accompaniment*[17] by dividing registers (in Mexico between c´ and c♯´). Mariano's modifications demonstrated a willingness to break with the past that might support the idea that the

15. The house was appraised in 1802 by Joaquín de Heredia y Sarmiento, the well-known architect and member of the San Carlos Academy, for 9,880 pesos, when Mariano requested a loan of 3,000 pesos from the nuns of the Convento de la Concepción in order to finish renovating the building; he presented the results of Heredia's appraisal in the loan petition. Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Instituciones Coloniales, Regio Patronato Indiano, Bienes Nacionales, Vol. 335, Folder 17, unnumbered folios.

16. The position was announced on November 7, 1797, on the death of the incumbent, the organ builder Domingo Millán. Archivo del Cabildo Catedral Metropolitano de México (ACCMM), Edictos, box 6, file 24.

17. Indeed, musical textures sometimes prohibit the use of two manuals since the left hand is required to grab notes in the treble portion of the keyboard or vice versa.

family embraced the then-modern piano.

Mariano was succeeded as organ technician in Mexico City Cathedral by his son, José Joaquín.[18] Almost immediately after José Joaquín occupied the position of tuner, authorities were convinced by the organists that the organs needed cleaning and repair, even though similar work had been carried out only sixteen years earlier by Mariano. It is also interesting that, although José Joaquín immortalized his own renovation of Nassarre's Gospel organ through a label he placed on the wind chest, there is no documentary evidence to indicate that he himself made any modifications to the organ as his father had done.

On December 1, 1821, following José Joaquín's renovation of the organs, cathedral authorities complained that the organists were not making adequate use of the organs' tonal resources and ordered the organ builder to draft a list of their registers. José Joaquín complied and the registers of the Gospel organ were copied into the minutes of the Mexico City Cathedral chapter on February 6, 1821.[19] At the end of the list, José Joaquín provides the information that it was his father, Mariano, who had built the organ's fourth division. Since its construction is not mentioned in the extensive documentation concerning Mariano's renovation of the organ of 1800 and no separate documents about the division's construction have come to light, José Joaquín's statement is the only source for assigning its authorship.

On March 27, 1824, at the age of forty-two, José Joaquín requested a leave of absence owing to illness, and he died in September 1825, only nine years after succeeding his father as organ technician in the cathedral.[20] He was succeeded by a Francisco Pérez de Lara, who was almost certainly his eighteen-year-old son.[21] Of all of the family members, it would be Francisco who served the cathedral longest, remaining in the position of tuner for thirty-seven years. Upon his death in 1862 at the age of fifty-five, his younger brother Manuel applied for the position. At one point in the payment record, Francisco charged the cathedral "on behalf of his brother José Joaquín," implying that the latter was also somehow

18. ACCMM, Actas LXVIII, f. 56.

19. ACCMM, Actas LXIX, f. 307 and ff. 314v–316.

20. ACCMM, Actas LXX, f. 347 (27 March 1824) and Actas LXXI, f. 119 (20 September 1825).

21. Perhaps oddly, Francisco is not identified as José Joaquín's son in the chapter acts.

involved in the maintenance of the organs.[22] These brief entries in the cathedral records are the only times either Manuel or José Joaquín Jr. surface in relationship to organ building.[23]

Mariano, José Joaquín (Sr.), and Francisco Pérez de Lara were thus responsible for the care of the Nassarre organs for at least sixty-four years, longer than even the Cazela family, the original inheritors of Nassarre's legacy. The cathedral organists and authorities seemed pleased with the service they received from the Pérez de Laras, as no major complaints can be found in the record.

The Work of the Pérez de Lara Family Outside of Mexico City Cathedral

Repairs to the Mexico City Cathedral organs were mostly routine matters that often did not merit mention in the chapter acts. Work in the cathedral was normally part-time in nature, and the majority of the Pérez de Laras' organ building activities took place elsewhere. Unfortunately, surviving organs built by the family—aside from Francisco's in El Colegio de las Vizcaínas—have been hard to find. Still, it seems likely that identifying additional work may merely be a question of patience and research.

That the Pérez de Lara dynasty lasted three quarters of a century (ca.1775–1850) means it witnessed the transition from Baroque through Neoclassicism and on to Romanticism. This evolution is most easily recognizable in the design of the family's organ cases: the one in Texmelucan is late Baroque in style, while Francisco's organ for El Colegio de las Vizcaínas is neoclassical. But since the sons would see opera (and *zarzuela*) eventually come to decisively dominate musical taste, even in the church, it is not surprising that some construction details of their organs—notably keyboard extension and dispositions—also underwent noticeable changes. Indeed, what is perhaps more surprising in a time of such sweeping changes in musical style is the persistence of traditional characteristics—notably the split keyboard, *Cornetas*, and external, horizontal reeds of the classic Spanish organ.

22. ACCMM, Ministros XVII, f. 44.

23. Many of the payment records are missing from the chapter archive, however.

Mariano Pérez de Lara (Active ca.1765–April 5, 1816)

In November 1801, José Gómez, *maestro de sagradas ceremonias* of Mexico City Cathedral, wrote a laudatory evaluation of Mariano's organ-building skills in which he provided a list of places where the builder had previously worked, including Santuario Mapethe, El Cardonal and Ixmiquilpan in Hidalgo, Texmelucan in Puebla, Tepalcingo in Morelos, and Santo Domingo, Santa Clara, and Tlaltelulco in Mexico City.[24] While the letter offers no details concerning the exact nature of the work (such as, for example, new organ or repair, carpentry or pipework, solo work or collaboration/consultation), it nonetheless offers a crucial starting point for any investigation aiming to identify his output, and each will now be considered here.

San Martín Texmelucan (Puebla). Gómez's letter states that Mariano constructed an organ for the parochial church of Texmelucan. At the end of the eighteenth century there was only one church there—the then-parochial one attached to the Franciscan convent, which prior to secularization had been administered by the friars.[25] Unlike the Vizcaínas organ, the organ in Texmelucan contains no label documenting its construction, and, until the discovery of Gómez's letter, the only historical information about the construction of the instrument had come from a plaque placed inside the organ when the organ was restored in 1919 stating the organ "was finished" on April 9, 1794. Although the source of this information is unknown, the date coincides both with Mariano's working period and with the already cited letter placing the organ's construction before 1801. Thus there is ample reason to believe the claim, and we should now consider Mariano to be its builder.

The organ in Texmelucan (fig. 5) adheres to the precepts of the "classic" Spanish organ—divided keyboard; exterior trumpets hung horizontally in the front of the case; *Cornetas* of various types; and echo "technology" (one of the *Cornetas* is enclosed in a box with a movable lid).[26] As

24. ACCMM, Fábrica material, box 3, file 5-3, ff. 5–9.

25. I thank my colleague Gustavo Mauleón Rodríguez for this information.

26. Louis Jambou, *Evolución del órgano español* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1988), passim. Spanish organs, like organs everywhere, evolved over time and, naturally, Gothic or Renaissance organs in Spain were very different, both from each other and from Baroque/Classical organs. The characteristics considered to be "classic" in the Spanish organ themselves developed at different times: the divided keyboard had appeared by the

is the case with many Spanish organs, there is only one keyboard and no pedal of any kind. The keyboard range is fifty-one notes, like the Epistle organ of Mexico City Cathedral built by Joseph Nassarre in 1735–36, sixty years earlier. Since the bass octave is chromatic, the bass half of the keyboard consists of twenty-five notes (C–c´) while the treble half consists of twenty-six (c♯´–d´´´). The slider chest is chromatic and is located above the keyboard. As is typical in Spanish organs, the pallet box is in the front of the organ above the built-in console and below the horizontal reeds. The action is suspended with a rollerboard. There are stop jambs on either side of the keyboard, the left one for the bass registers and the right for the treble registers. The keyboard is older than the modern restoration but not original. The bellows is of the feeder/reservoir type and was likely installed in 1919. A motor was added in the restoration.

With eleven stops in the left hand and twelve in the right (two horizontal façade reeds in each hand, 4' and 2' in the left and 8' and 16' in the right) and four toy stops, the organ falls on the large side of the spectrum of typical organs of the time, which range from six registers in each hand up to fifteen or so. There are two layers of paper labels. The top layer appears to be from 1919 but the originals, written in red ink, are still underneath and show through where the newer ones have fallen off. The following names are thus taken (mostly) from the 1919 labels.

Table 1. Disposition of the San Martín Texmelucan organ (Mariano Antonio Pérez de Lara, 1794; restored by Joaquín Wesslowski, 1984/85).

Left hand, 25 notes, C–c´	**English equivalents**	**Right hand, 26 notes, c♯´–d´´´**
Clarin en quincena 2	[Exterior Trumpets]	*Trompa real 8*
Bajoncillo 4	[Exterior Trumpets]	*Trompa magna 16*
Flautado mayor 8	[Principal]	*Flautado mayor 8*
Violón 8	[Metal Stopped Flute]	*Violón 8*
Octava 4	[Octave]	*Octava 8*
Docena 2 2/3	[Twelfth]	*Docena 2 2/3*
Quincena Clara 2	[Fifteenth]	*Quincena 2*

end of the sixteenth century, the classic *Corneta* developed over the course of the seventeenth century, and horizontal exterior trumpets appeared toward the end of the seventeenth century.

FIGURE 5. Organ of San Martín Texmelucan, Puebla. 1794. Mariano Antonio Pérez de Lara. Photograph by Edward C. Pepe.

Left hand, 25 notes, C–c´	**English equivalents**	**Right hand, 26 notes, c♯´–d´´´**
Quincena Nasarda 2	[Wide Fifteenth]	*Quincena 2*
Diez y Novena 1 1/3	[Nineteenth]	*Diez y Novena 1 1/3*
Lleno II (1, 2/3)	[Mixture]	*Lleno III (4, 2 2/3,2)*
Veinte y docena 1	[Twenty-second]	
	[Corneta]	*Corneta clara III* (8,4,2 2/3)
	[Enclosed Corneta]	*Corneta en ecos IV* (8,4,2, 2 2/3)
Campanas, Sirena, Pajaritos, Tambores	[Bells, "Siren," Drums, Birds]	

The instrument is larger than many Mexican organs—a true eight-foot organ (open metal pipes down to C) and including both eight-foot *Flautado* and eight-foot *Violón* (Stopped Flute of metal) in both hands. Still, the organ appears larger than it really is because much of the façade, constructed to fit the arch which houses the organ, is filled by non-speaking pipes. (In this regard it is similar to the Nassarre Mexico City Cathedral organs, which Mariano presumably knew well, even if the Texmelucan organ was built before he was appointed at the cathedral.) Importantly, the balcony is also visually incorporated into the organ and extends downwards with rich decoration to further contribute to the illusion of monumentality. The ultrabaroque façade (fig. 5) exhibits a typical lack of clear structure—there is no organized division into towers and fields for example—and consists basically of one large field divided only by a few undulating lines. The rich polychroming in muted tones imitating marble is also very typical of baroque style. The lower case is coffered with moldings and the façade includes numerous elaborate and gilded carvings in the rocaille style.

Unique to Mariano's Texmelucan façade are two large, reclining mermaids, each holding an imitation trumpet. The organ also includes a "Mermaid" ("Sirenas") register consisting of two low-pitched, open metal pipes (one on either end of the façade) that softly undulate when engaged (they do not beat rapidly as in the Drum stop) producing a haunting sound meant to "imitate" the sound of mermaids. For these reasons, the

Texmelucan organ is sometimes today referred to as the Mermaid Organ.

The organ was renovated ("reformado") in 1919 and restored by Joachim Wesslowski in 1984/85. In many ways, the Texmelucan organ can be viewed as a both the culmination and a last-gasp example of the Baroque aesthetic.

Ixmiquilpan (Hidalgo). Although, as with the Texmelucan organ, Mariano's name does not appear on the organ of the Capilla del Carmen in Ixmiquilpan, there are several reasons to believe that he built it. First, Gómez's letter states he worked there. Second, Mariano, his wife, and their children were born there and lived in the Del Carmen *barrio* until about 1797. Third, the Ixmiquilpan organ bears an inscription reading "Año de 1796 y 97," a date that fits perfectly into a work list for Mariano and dates the organ's construction just two years after the organ in Texmelucan. The fourth reason has to do with certain details of the organ case, which has been described as follows:

> It has a very peculiar façade, with curious volutes that are difficult to ascribe to any particular style, although they give the impression of being of some late and outdated Baroque. It is very likely a question of a transitional instrument, with baroque elements that, although altered, refused to die, and a regional neoclassicism displaying some characteristics already common in the first half of the nineteenth century, as for example the undulating lines of the pipe shades in its upper portion.[27]

Even if a movement away from the Baroque and towards the neoclassical is already quite clear in Ixmiquilpan, there are nonetheless marked similarities with the case of the Texmelucan organ, including the volutes and undulating pipe shades. Lastly, the technical details of the organ are much the same as in Texmelucan except that the instrument was slightly smaller: it appears to have had a forty-nine note compass—twenty-three notes (C, D, E–c´) in the bass and twenty-six (c♯´–d´´´) in the treble—and just ten stops in the left hand and nine in the right (or nine and eight) including two horizontal façade reeds in each hand.

In stark contrast to the Texmelucan instrument and in line with the Ix-

27. Daniel Guzmán, "Panorama de la organería en el Estado de Hidalgo," in *Arcanos hidalguenses: En memoria de Victor Manuel Ballesteros García*, ed. Enrique Rivas Paniagua and Evaristo Luvián Torres (Pachuca: Universidad Autónoma de Hidalgo, 2005), 73. The translation is my own.

miquilpan organ's proto-neoclassicism, the organ case is less elaborately decorated. Painting is restricted to the panels of the lower case and imitates wood grain and moldings. In 1858 José A. Suárez rebuilt the organ in what was perhaps an extensive intervention. In spite of both alterations and the lamentable condition of the instrument today, it deserves further study, particularly its relationship to the organ in Texmelucan.

Santuario Mapethe and El Cardonal (Hidalgo). At first glance, it is difficult to make sense of Gómez's reference to Mariano's involvement with organs in Mapethe and El Cardonal. In Mapethe, there are currently two historic organs—one built by Jerónimo Suárez in 1852 (playable thanks to a restoration by Daniel Guzmán and students of the Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía in Mexico City) and the remains of an older organ (including its wind chest and an exquisitely carved case) with a label painted on the wall stating that the organ was built in 1766 by "Joseph Joaquín de Bera Betancurt" (Vera Vetancur). Are we to think, then, that Mariano also built an instrument (now lost) for the church at some point in time between Vetancur's organ of 1766 and Suárez's of 1852? Instead, there are reasons to believe that Mariano was involved in the construction of the Vetancur instrument. As it turns out, Mariano's older sister, María Gertrudis, had married a José Vera Vetancur. Although the marriage record does not state that he was an organ builder, the coincidence would seem too great for this not to have been Joseph Joaquín. Mariano, furthermore, would have been thirteen in 1766—old enough to be serving as an apprentice[28]—while José Joaquín Vera Vetancur, if the same age as his wife, would have been twenty-three. Indeed, the lives of the two families were effectively interwoven by María Gertrudis's marriage: her son José María served as best man at the marriage of his uncle Agustín (Mariano's youngest brother). Mariano served as godfather to José María's child, and the families also had work relationships: when Mariano renovated the Mexico City Cathedral organs, José (presumably José María and not José Joaquín) received a payment of 50 pesos for unspecified work. Little is known about the organs of the Vetancur family, who also built altarpieces. Further study of the surviving wind chest of the Vetancur Mapethe organ could provide

28. Although no official guild system for organ builders existed either in Spain or in New Spain, apprenticeship did.

interesting details concerning building at the time of Mariano's training.

The situation in El Cardonal is also complicated, because the organ that survives in the church today is signed by José Suárez and dated 1816. As in Mapethe, there is reason to believe that personal relationships could explain the apparent contradiction. One of Mariano's daughters married a José Suárez. Again, it is not specified that her husband was an organ builder, and whether he was part of the organ-building Suárez clan remains to be confirmed. But both seem likely. Indeed, the José María Suárez Pérez de Lara who built the large organ of Durango Cathedral (Opus 16, 1851) was probably the José María Manuel Joaquín born to the couple on 24 March 1812 and christened at La Santa Veracruz.

Did Mariano participate in the construction of the El Cardonal instrument as a collaborator with, or perhaps in the planning, as an advisor to José Suárez? If so, the organ was under construction for an unusually long period of time—at least sixteen years—since the letter is dated 1801. The organ case in El Cardonal, furthermore, is decidedly neoclassical—it resembles Francisco's case for Las Vizcaínas of 1834—which makes it difficult, though not impossible, to think that it was designed before 1801. Nonetheless, there must be a reason that Gómez included El Cardonal in Mariano's work list. Here—as also in Mapethe—there is much more to be investigated in local archives. Indeed, such situations remind us that the construction of an organ is a very complicated process and that circumstances are often much less straightforward than they seem. To say, for instance, that such an organ was built by such a person in such a year is frequently neither possible nor desirable.

Tepalcingo (Morelos) and Santa Clara and Tlalteluco (Mexico City). Of Pérez's organ for Tepalcingo there is currently no information available whatsoever. Nor is there any trace today of Mariano's organs in the convents of Santa Clara or Tlaltelulco in Mexico City.

Santo Domingo (Mexico City). Mariano's organ in Santo Domingo has also vanished, but luckily there is photographic documentation of it. The organ was still in place (along with two other organs) when Guillermo Kahlo took a photograph facing down the nave of the church in the direction of the choir loft ca.1910.[29] Pérez's organ was Santo Domingo's

29. Guillermo Kahlo, "Iglesia de Santo Domingo, nave central y vista del coro," MID

gospel, or small, organ. Nonetheless, the extraordinary detail of Kahlo's photograph allows us to observe that the organ was likely not that small: it included an 8' *Flautado* (open 6') as well as three horizontal reeds in the right hand (two 8's and a 16') and two or three in the left hand (very likely two 4's and a 2' but hard to verify from the photo). Furthermore, the case was not shallow, suggesting a fair number of registers. The organ's pipe shades exhibit the same undulating form as in Texmelucan and Ixmiquilpan. The case is unadorned and restrained, which strongly suggests that the organ was constructed after Ixmiquilpan and not before Texmelucan, and thus after Mariano and his family moved to Mexico City. Further research may yet uncover a contract with a disposition.

Basílica de Guadalupe (Mexico City). In an application for a permit to ride horses filed by Mariano in 1812 he states that he was responsible for the care of the organs in the Basilica of Guadalupe at that time, one of which would have been the monumental organ constructed by Pablo Antonio Bravo ca.1800.[30]

Ex-convento de Jesús María (Mexico City). An acknowledgement of payment in the amount of 900 pesos signed by Mariano on February 22, 1810,[31] reveals that he cleaned and renovated the organ in Jesús María. Indeed, since records show that Domingo Millán had taken care of the organs in Jesús María,[32] we should perhaps assume that Mariano took over caring for the convent's organs after Domingo's death just as he did in the cathedral. The 1810 work was more extensive than a simple cleaning, since he also added two registers—a *Flautado de 26* in the right hand (as he had done in the Mexico City Cathedral Epistle organ) and a *Trompa real* (with wooden resonators) in both hands.

Other organs. Although we still lack a complete picture of Mariano's work, it is now clear that he not only left an impressive array of organs

77_20140827–134500:7024, Fototeca Nacional del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

30. AGN, Instituciones Coloniales, Indiferente Virreinal, Caja 4233, Expediente 011 (1812–1813).

31. Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Salud (AHSS), Fondo-Convento de Jesús María, Libro 480, f. 6.

32. AHSS, Fondo-Convento de Jesús María, Libro 362, f. 28.

over a considerable geographic range but was also involved in the maintenance of many instruments including the most impressive of his day—those in the Mexico City Cathedral and in the Basilica of Guadalupe.

José Joaquín Pérez de Lara

There are currently no instruments known to have been built by José Joaquín. He continued his father's maintenance work in the cathedral (including a renovation of each of the organs there), in Jesús María, and presumably in the Basilica of Guadalupe as well. It seems likely that further research will someday reveal that José Joaquín also left a richer legacy than what can be acknowledged today, even though he did not live as long as his father.

Francisco Pérez de Lara

El Colegio de las Vizcaínas (Mexico City). Francisco's organ for the Colegio de las Vizcaínas, built in 1834, boasts an elegant case of fine wood with a simple, neoclassical (then modern) design (fig. 6). But it retains many elements of the classic Spanish organ: divided registers, horizontal façade reeds, and *Corneta*. As was typical, there is no pedal and just one manual.

Table 2. Disposition of the organ for the Colegio de las Vizcaínas (Francisco Pérez de Lara, 1834; restored by Susan Tattershall, 1996).

Left hand 25 notes, C–c´	**English equivalents**	**Right hand 29 notes, c♯´–f´´´**
Flautado mayor	[4' Principal 8']	*Flautado mayor*
Violón	[8' Stopped Flute 8']	*Violón*
*Quincena clara**	[2' Principal 4']	*Octava clara*
*Diez y novena**	[1 1/3' Principal 2 2/3']	*Docena clara*
*Veinte y docena**	[Principal 1' / Cornet]	*Corneta magna*
Lleno	[2/3' Mixture 2 2/3']	*Lleno*

FIGURE 6. Organ of the Colegio de las Vizcaínas, Mexico City. 1834. Francisco Pérez de Lara. Photograph by Edward C. Pepe.

Left hand 25 notes, C–c´	**English equivalents**	**Right hand 29 notes, c♯´–f´´´**
Bajoncillo	[4' Exterior Trumpet 8']	*Clarín claro*
Clarín en quincena	[2' Exterior Trumpet 16']	*Trompa magna*
Pájaros, Campanas, Tambores		

*****Names are in relation to 8' pitch and not to the *Flautado mayor* 4' of the left hand

The organ was restored by Susan Tattershall in 1996.

While the organ certainly bears some similarities with Mariano's organs, some important differences stand out. One of these is the extended compass of fifty-four notes (C–f´´´). Another is the tendency to dispose an octave (or more) higher in the left hand than in the right (only the *Violón* continues through both hands). Indeed, even the *Flautado mayor* in the right hand is at 8' while that of the left hand is at 4'. This construction practice, also seen in organs of the Castro family in Puebla, most likely reflects the decline of polyphonic music (where octavization in the bass would have been more obvious) and its replacement with harmonically conceived, even homophonic, music or a (soprano) melody with chordal accompaniment. In certain regards, the entire organ becomes a kind of mixture.

Apan (Hidalgo). Thanks to Daniel Guzmán's survey of surviving organs in Hidalgo, we know that, in addition to his organ in Las Vizcaínas, Francisco also built the one in the former convent church of Apan, Hidalgo in 1857.[33]

Manuel and José Joaquín Jr.

There is currently nothing known about the work of either builder.

33. Guzmán, "Panorama de la organería," 74.

Discussion

Mariano's organ in Texmelucan appears to us to be "classic," but to what degree is it really so? Would careful study reveal incipient modern features? What are we to make of the evolution of the family's organs and of the post-classical organs like those built by Francisco Pérez de Lara? Why was it suddenly acceptable in Francisco's organ to have no eight-foot Principal in the left hand to match the one in the right hand? Was the general difference in pitch between the two hands simply a question of nomenclature and something to be "worked around?" (For example, did one select the *Flautado mayor* in the left hand with the *Octava* in the right?) Was this just a four-foot organ with an added eight-foot *Flautado* in the right hand? Or did the differences in pitch between the bass and treble halves of the organ simply not disturb anyone at the time? Might it even have been preferable? (Reed pairings in Spanish façade trumpets had reflected this practice from their inception—a *Bajoncillo* 4' in the left hand was paired with *Clarín* 8' in the right hand.) Further study of the family's organs, along with the organ music (such as the *Versos* of Marco Vega[34]) and performance practices of the time, will surely someday shed more light on these and other questions.

The Pérez de Lara Family and Pianos

In 1812 (during Mariano's lifetime), José Joaquín acknowledged receipt of payment for having repaired and renovated a piano in the royal convent of Jesús María in Mexico City,[35] thereby establishing that the family was involved at least in the maintenance of pianos. Indeed, the convent's payment records list the tuning of the organs and pianos together as a single item,[36] and a note on a receipt signed by Domingo Millán

34. Josefina Muriel and Luis Lledías, *La música en las instituciones femeninas* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009), 227–36.

35. "Reciví de el Señor Don Andres de Mendivil y Amirola, como Administrador de los propios y [rentas] de el Real Combento de Jesus Maria, ochenta y ocho pesos en satisfacción de la limpieza y reparos que hise a el clave de d[ic]ho combento a el que le puse su guarda polvos y el uso de sus registros a el pie; y p[ara] su constancia lo firme en 12 de agosto de 1812. Jose Joaquin Perez de Lara [signature]." AHSS, Fondo Jesús María, Libro 500 (Comprovantes/Año de 1813), unnumbered folio between ff. 36 and 37.

36. For example, "Gasto del templado del Organo y Claves/ Recivi del Sor Dn Andres

saying that he received fifty pesos annually "for tuning the organ and piano" makes it clear that the two went hand in hand.[37] Maintaining stringed keyboard instruments, in other words, sometimes formed a normal part of the work of an organ builder, including the Pérez de Laras.

Based on the Tucson piano, we can add the name Pérez de Lara to the list of piano makers in Mexico. But which member of the family might be responsible for the instrument? Given the label's date of 1823, it cannot have been Mariano, who died in 1816, although he may well have been the one who introduced the family to the production of pianos and might have been involved in the construction of earlier instruments. Francisco, on the other hand, is too young to be the instrument's maker, as he was only sixteen in 1823, although he might have participated in its construction. The most likely candidate is José Joaquín, who in 1823 had not yet been taken with the illness that led to his leave of absence in 1824 and eventually to his death. Until further documents surface, we can only speculate. What is clear is that the Pérez de Lara organ-building family had a strong involvement with the piano and that organ and piano technicians/makers were often one and the same. Further study of the archival records and discovery of more pianos constructed in Mexico will undoubtedly fill in our picture of piano making there and the role in that of the Pérez de Lara family.

de Mendivil Amirola, n[ues]tro, Administrador Cincuenta y nueve pesos y un [centavo] para la afinación del Organo y Claves en todo el año y para que conste lo firme en II de Julio de 1827." AHSS, Fondo Jesús María, Libro 595 (Data del Convento de Jesus María para la cuenta 33. Cumplida en 12 de Julio de 1827), f. 16v.

37. "[S]inquenta pesos anuales como afinador del Organo y Clabe." AHSS, Fondo Jesús María, Libro 362, f. 28.