

The organ of the *Misericórdia* Church, Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island (Azores): some notes

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Summary

This text presents an overlook of the organ of the Church of *Misericórdia*, part of one of the most influent institutions in the town of Angra do Heroísmo in Terceira Island (Azores). This is one of the last instruments build by the António Xavier Machado e Cerveira's workshop. It was build for the *Misericórdia* Church in 1829.

The confraternity of *Misericórdia* of Angra appeared around the time of the settlement of Terceira Island. It was linked from its origin to the Hospital founded in the *vila* of Angra by its first *capitão-donatário* João Vaz Corte-Real and his fellow brothers of the confraternity of Espírito Santo on 15 March 1492. It was not only dedicated to treating the poor and the helpless but also those sick and injured during the long maritime journeys, gaining the title among Azorean historians as the “hospital of the Portuguese discoveries”.

The hospital was part of a complex that also included the hermitage of Santo Espírito located in a strategic part of the town, near the end of the *Ribeira dos Moinhos*, the main fresh water supply of Angra and just in front of the town's gates in the Customhouse harbour.

The confraternity of Espírito Santo was absorbed by the foundation of the House of *Misericórdia* of Angra in 1498 that had planned building a larger church. The sixteenth-century temple had a facade with three doors topped by a round window and occupied the space between the streets of Santo Espírito and Direita in front of the Customhouse square. It was linked to the hospital by a passage over the Street of Santo Espírito.

Already in the eighteenth century a new church was planned and on 21 October 1728 the Bishop of Angra D. Manuel Álvares da Costa placed the foundational stone of the new church in a pompous ceremony (Sampaio, 1904 p. 231). It is estimated that the construction cost around 350.000 *cruzados*. The work was finished in 1746 and the temple was consecrated and blessed on 4 June by the general vicar of the Diocese Manuel dos Santos Rolim by commission of the Bishop D. Fr. Valério do Sacramento (Andrade, 1891, p. 124). This was an even pompous ceremony that included the transfer of the Crucified Christ image from the Cathedral where it had been waiting for 19 years with several sung masses as well as a procession to the new church (Andrade, 1891, p. 124).

The church's high facade with two bell towers stands imponent at the Customhouse square, occupying the quarters between the Street of Santo Espírito and the Right Street that links the peer to the town's main square. It's wide interior also makes an impact. There are many lateral chapels that both Andrade (1891) and Sampaio (1904) took the time to describe.

On the Epistle side of the church, from the main chapel to the back we found the chapels of the Crucified Christ of the *Misericórdia*, of the Divine Shepherdess, and of Our Lord Jesus of the Wounds. On the Gospel side of the church, the same number of chapels, of the Holy Ghost, Our Lady of the Nativity, and of the Holy Cross (Sampaio, 1904, p.

232). Besides these chapels, the main chapel is very spacious built in the style of the church of the town's Franciscan convent (Sampaio, 1904, p. 232).



Image 1

The *Misericórdia* Church, Angra do Heroísmo, current day.

Sampaio, when describing the church's interior, also mentioned the high choir over the main entrance as a large place with "it's own organ" (Sampaio, 1904, p. 232). Andrade complained about the lack of light in the church, darkened by the wooden doors on the gallery windows over the chapels (Andrade, 1891, p. 124).

Although consecrated in 1746 work on the church continued throughout the second half of the eighteenth century well into the first decades of the following century. By 1786 the construction of the church's main chapel had been initiated which was still to be concluded by 1794 as well as "other works in the church" (Noé, 2012). Work on the chapel was still not concluded by 1799. By 1803 there were still works being done in the church although no specifics were given to which ones were still to be concluded. In 1815 Pedro Homem da Costa Noronha was re-elected as *provedor* (provider) of the *Misericórdia* to oversee the works in the church. By 1819 two of the church's chapels were still in stone awaiting to be plastered (Noé, 2012).

The delay in several construction works in the church which were still being done in the first decades of the nineteenth century meant that the acquisition of the organ was part of the conclusion of the construction of the church initiated a century earlier.



Image 2

The *Misericórdia* Church (interior), Angra do Heroísmo.

The organ of the *Misericórdia* Church was built at the workshop of António Xavier Machado e Cerveira with the number 104. The date of 1829 means that the instrument was concluded after the organbuilder's death. It is a twin of the organ made for the Convent of Santo André (also with the number 104) which dated from the previous year of 1828. Together with another organ, which is now in the Church of Santa Cruz, Graciosa Island, built in 1830 without number, these were the three organs still to be finished in his workshop that were to be sent "to the islands". The widow of Machado e Cerveira, Isabel da Fonseca e Cerveira, committed herself in the *post mortem* inventory to finish these instruments, for which her husband had already received payment, and shipped them to their final destinations (Tudela, 2007, p. 134). Machado e Cerveira died in September 1828 and the widow kept the workshop going until 1830. Isabel, that by the time of death of his husband was 35 years old, remarried and left Lisbon and the workshop afterwards. During these two years that the workshop was open after his death were only dedicated to fulfil the commissions that had been already paid for by the clients. The three incomplete organs were finished by Machado e Cerveira apprentice and assistant the official José Teodoro Correia de Andrade (Tudela, 2007, p. 134).

Although it is a twin of the 1828 Santo André instrument, several technical features make them different, as well as the state of transformation found at the time of its restoration, in a poor state of conservation and deeply altered. It has the same box dimensions as the 1828 instrument as well as the particularity of having an abbreviator. It also has pedals to cancel the *cheios* and the reeds (Cordeniz, 2012, p. 55). Regarding the registers, the instrument doesn't have the *Dozena* and *Dezanovena* registers and, instead,

has the *Vinte Dozena* which is an uncommon feature in the organs Machado e Cerveira made for the Azores isles (Cordeniz, 2012, p. 56).

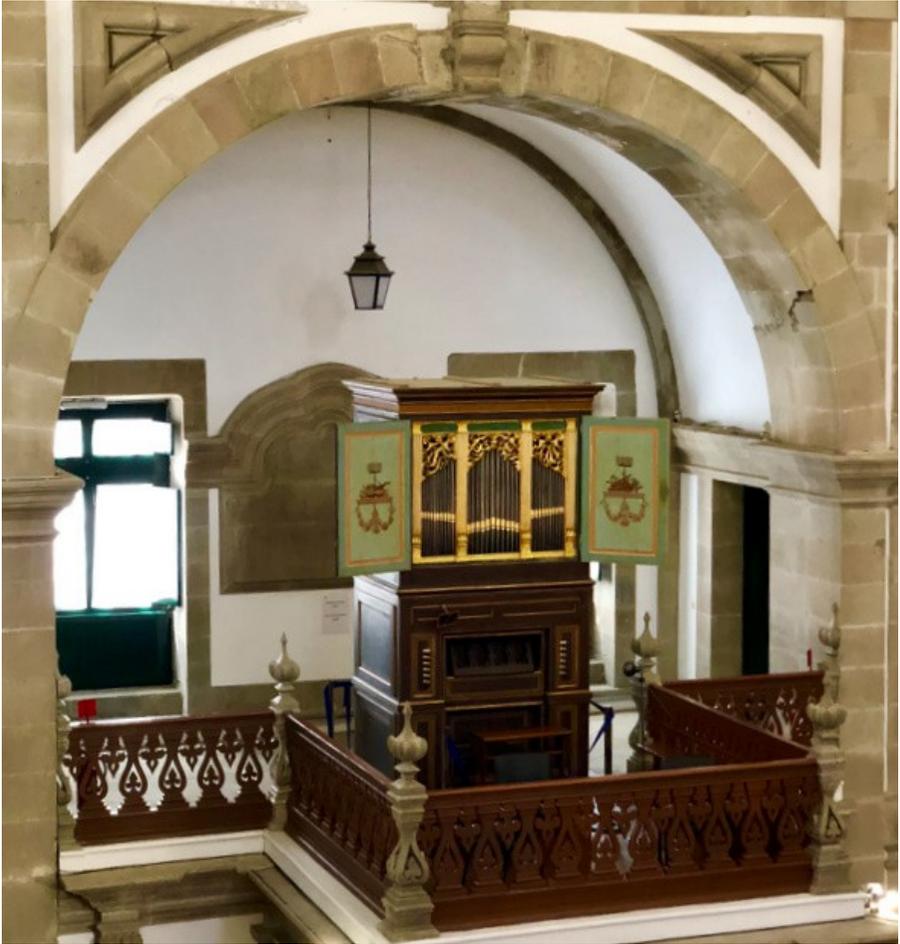


Image 3

The Machado e Cerveira organ of the *Misericórdia* Church, Angra do Heroísmo.

LEFT HAND

- ❀ *Fagote*
- ❀ *Clarão, 5v.*
- ❀ *Compostas de 22.^a, 3v.*
- ❀ *Quinzena*
- ❀ *Flautado de 6 aberto*
- ❀ *Flautado de 12 tapado*

RIGHT HAND

- ❀ *Clarim*
- ❀ *Corneta, 5v.*
- ❀ *Compostas de 15.^a, 5v.*
- ❀ *Voz humana*
- ❀ *Flauta travessa*
- ❀ *Flautado de 12 aberto*

Table 1

The organ register scheme (Machado and Doderer, 2012, p. 87).

The organ is located in the center arch of the church's high choir in an advanced gallery over the windbreak of the main entrance. This seems to suggest that it was placed there in 1829, although there is no confirmation in the nineteenth-century accounts regarding this. Sampaio mentions that the organ was already in the high choir when describing the church in 1904 (Sampaio, 1904, p. 232).



Organ of Misericórdia Church
Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira Island
(Machado e Cerveira, n. 109, 1829)

This instrument was severely damaged by the 1980 earthquake that shook Terceira Island on New Year's Day and was, subsequently, restored by the Portuguese organbuilder Dinarte Machado in 1998 which, among other features, introduced a new electric wind supply system (Machado & Doderer, 2012, p. 87).



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