Flautas, pífanos, and zabevas in the Inventories of the House of Mendoza

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The Mendoza family constitutes one of the most significant examples in the patronage of the arts in Spain during the Renaissance. The lineage gave birth to some of the most committed lords of arms in Castilla right from its formation as a kingdom,¹ and through the centuries they served as powerful politicians, counsellors, and ambassadors of the Spanish crown who transmitted the cultivation of the arts from one generation to the next. Particularly interesting are the contributions made by Don Íñigo López de Mendoza (1398–1458), the first Marquis of Santillana, who introduced French and Italian forms into Spanish literature through his poetry.² His support and that of his heirs over the course of the Renaissance to artists and writers such as Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, Juan de Colonia, Luis Gálvez de Montalvo, Juan Guas, Jorge Inglés, and Alonso Mudarra made the Palace of the Infantado in Guadalajara an attractive stop for all nobles crossing the lands of Castilla.

One of the most important titles granted by the Catholic Queen Isabel to the sons of the first Marquis of Santillana was the Duchy of the Infantado. The idea of the present lecture emerged from the surprising discovery of two great collections of instruments listed within the Wills of two heirs of this lineage.

The presence of music in the Palace of the Infantado was so important that the number of chaplains, singers, and musicians at the time of the third Duke, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza y Luna—the so-called “Grand Duke”—exceeded that of the royal Court: 10 chaplains and 5 waiters, 25 singers, 1 organist, 8 musicians, 9 trumpeters, 3 drummers, and 1 tabor player in 1511.³ Among these 8 musicians the continuous presence of 3–4 sackbut players and 5 shawmists is documented until 1535, already under the fourth Duke's tenure. When the third Duke died in 1531, all his assets were sold at public auction, including the musical instruments.⁴

Despite this sale, the inventory of the holdings of Don Íñigo López de Mendoza, the fourth Duke, registered in 1566, reveals among his goods a surprisingly rich collection of wind instruments: 1 box with 3 duzaynas (shawms, one bigger than the others), 1 box with 13 orlos (crumhorns, big and small), and an unusual variety of

¹ Cristina de Arteaga Falguera, La Casa del Infantado. Cabeza de los Mendoza (Madrid: Duque del Infantado, 1940), 6.
³ BNE, MSS.MICRO/6743.
members of the flute family: 7 *flautas de flandes* (from Flanders), 1 *zabeva*, 1 *pifaro de hueso con dos cabezas* (fife made of bone with two heads), and 2 *flautas unidas* (joined together).  

The other collection of instruments we are considering comes from the inventory of Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, son of the fourth Duke, made in 1560. Don Diego, who held the titles of Count of Saldaña and third Marquis of Cenete, lived in the Palace of the Infantado at Don Íñigo's expense and died six years before his father. Don Diego's goods include a *menestrila*—or chest of wind instruments—containing a similarly large number of kinds, such as 2 sackbuts (one big and another silvered), 2 curtals, 11 cornetts (one of them a mute cornett), one box with 7 *pífanos* (5 small and 2 big) and 1 *flauta de madera* (wooden flute), and another two boxes containing a total of 17 *flautas* (big and small). In this inventory we can also find some names of minstrels to whom the instruments had been checked out.

Bearing this information in mind, let's have a close look at the *flautas* described:

The instruments named simply *flautas* in Don Diego's holdings may be understood as recorders, given the details supplied for all the other *flautas*, although no evidence of this fact is demonstrated in the Spanish language. Apparently all minstrels were required to play the *flauta* in addition to shawm if they wanted a post in major churches and cathedrals, but any further assertion remains uncertain.

The 7 *flautas de flandes* in the belongings of Don Diego might be the same as the 7 *pífanos* that appear in the inventory of his father in 1566, in which case transverse flutes are clearly signified. In the chronicles of the sixteenth century, *pífanos* are often documented as being sounded in protocol entries to important cities of Kings and noblemen, together with drums and trumpets. Flanders, especially the City of Bruges, had been a significant center of woodwind-instrument making since the fourteenth century.

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5 AHN, Sección Nobleza, Osuna, C. 1834, D. 2.  
6 AHN, Sección Nobleza, Osuna, C. 1835, D. 1–2.  
7 Detailed information about the different names and nature of the flutes from medieval times in Spanish and Catalan can be found in the comprehensive study by David Lasocki, *The Recorder and Other Members of the Flute Family in Writings from 1100 to 1500* (Portland, OR: Instant Harmony, 2012), 28–30.  
8 Both names are used in the chronicles by Antoine de Lalaing *Récit du premier voyage de Philippe le Beau en Espagne* (1501) and Laurent Vital *Premier Voyage de Charles-Quint en Espagne* (1517–18). In contrast only *pífanos* appear in the entries of King Felipe II described in Juan Calvete de Estrella, *El felicísimo viaje del muy alto y muy poderoso príncipe Don Felipe* (Amberes, 1552); see http://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/i18n/consulta/busqueda_referencia.cmd?idValor=10112&id=737&posicion=2&forma=ficha, accessed 16/10/2016; and Andrés Muñoz, *Viaje de Felipe II a Inglaterra* (Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1877); see https://archive.org/details/viajedefelipese00mugoog, accessed 16/10/2016.
The last three flautas: 1 zaveba, 1 pífaro de hueso con dos cabezas, and 2 flautas unidas, are rare exemplars, probably explainable by the presence of the Moorish musician Lorenzo de Alentisque in both the records of the city of Guadalajara and the Count's list of instruments⁹:

! Zabeva presumably refers to the Xabeba or Axabeba (later even spelled as Jabega) reported in some fifteenth-century chronicles of Castilla. Although most scholars have considered this instrument simply the transverse flute depicted in the Cantigas de Santa María by Alfonso X, there is no evidence of the relation between the term and this image. The Spanish flutist Antonio Torralba, in contrast, posits the nature of an instrument made basically with the same principles as the transverse flute but blown obliquely through one of the ends of the tube instead of through a side hole.¹⁰ The xabebas mentioned in Christian sources often appear in the context of celebrations and dances, mostly together with Arabs. Surprisingly, the combination of instruments described—xabebas, trumpets, and drums—looks very much like what we see later in military and protocol descriptions of the sixteenth century. This instrument even appears among the stops of the organ in the Cathedral of Sevilla made by Maese Jorge as late as 1579¹¹ and was still in vogue at least through the seventeenth century.

Examples of this kind of “flute” still exist nowadays in the Arab world:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmenfBZNCnk (shibbabeh Pelestina)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXi11AX7Bww (nay, Lebanon)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2GXeggNQ6w (kawala flute, Egypt)

! Pífaro de hueso con dos cabezas clearly refers to a fife. The addition of two heads in the description may allude to an instrument like the Dolzflöit depicted in the second part of Syntagma Musicum, “De Organographia,” by Michael Praetorius (1619).¹² As shown in plate IX, such an instrument can be played both as a recorder and as a transverse flute, using different heads. The fact that the fife in the inventory is made of bone adds two other possibilities. If we understand ivory as a kind of bone, this could be an ivory flute or fife such as those found in the inventories of Henry VIII of England (1542 and 1547)¹³ and

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⁹ Layna Serrano, Historia de Guadalajara, III, 217
¹¹ Jesús Ángel de la Lama, El órgano barroco español, II (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 1995), 697
¹³ David Lasocki, “A Listing of Inventories and Purchases of Flutes, Recorders, Flageolets, and
Felipe II in Spain (1602). On the other hand, the use of ulnas of vultures and other birds to make flutes around the Mediterranean sea seems to have been a common practice, according to recent studies on ancient popular instruments.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-4259KjD0I (Ulna's Tabor-pipe today)

The 2 *flautas unidas* could be an instrument such as the *aulos* or *tibia* depicted on ancient Greek and Roman vessels. Several examples of these are also found in the tympani of Gothic churches and paintings. Apparently such a double-reed wind instrument, called *bifaro* or *bifara*, existed in Sicily and Calabria in the seventeenth century and participated in religious and civil ceremonies and processions, often accompanied by a tabor. The sound of the popular Sardinian *Launeddas* of today might be reminiscent of these earlier so-called “flutes.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzWITU3L-F0 (Launeddas)

Another hypothesis is based on those medieval double duct flutes the tubes of which are joined together:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTeHEGUMblk (Double recorder Pierre Hamon)

This kind of flute still survives in the traditional music of Calabria:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgemtg7AEkQ (Double recorder Calabria)

The next thing we need to discuss about the *flautas* in these inventories is the terminology. Whereas in other languages flute and recorder received different names, in Spanish the common noun given to all kinds of members of the flute family was *flauta*, on occasion differentiated with a suffix—*de alemania, travesera, de salterio*—but not always. We can find clear examples of this generalization in the


One box with 6 pífanos de marfil (four small and 2 bigger ivory fifes) was already present in the inventory of holdings left by Mary of Hungary to her niece Juana of Portugal in 1559. After Juana’s death these belongings were inherited in 1573 by Felipe II, who increased the collection with another set of six ivory fifes of the same size as the previous ones.


Libro de Buen Amor (1389), where plain *flauta* is linked to the tabor. The tabor pipe was a narrow duct flute with two or three holes in the front and a thumb hole behind; it was played one-handed while the other hand banged a tabor (drum), slug around the player’s neck. The combination of pipe and tabor still survives in the realm of popular music in many parts of Spain, and surprisingly the tabor pipe is called *gaita* (bagpipe) in the west part of Salamanca. Another example of the imprecision in terminology turns up in the chronicle about the visit to Spain of the Princess Juana and Felipe The Handsome in 1501 written by Antoine de Lalaing. Whereas in the Spanish translation the *flautas* always sound next to trumpets and drums, the French text specifies *chalemeux*, which normally meant some kind of double-reed instrument such as a shawm. However, an anonymous painting of the encounter in Villafáfila between the already crowned Felipe I of Castilla and Fernando II of Aragón in 1505, clearly depicts a backdrop of thousands of soldiers, with one of them playing a fife in the first line and a drummer next to him.

Some of the musicians who were issued these instruments were already in the service of the fourth Duke in 1535 when a significant reduction in the number of servants took place in the administration of the House. As reflected in the payrolls of that year, all musicians were either fired or transferred to the town of Pastrana. Although the salaries paid by the fourth Duke are incomplete between then and his death in 1566, the information found in the inventory of his son Don Diego implies that the musicians in charge of the flutes were flutists themselves. Moreover, the abundance of instruments of each family—especially cornets, sackbuts, crumhorns, and *flautas*—suggests the regular practice of consort playing in the Palace.

Considering that no minstrels appear in the wages of the Duke between 1562 and 1565—not even those named in the inventory of the Count, these musicians who were issued the instruments may have been employed in the several churches of Guadalajara founded and sponsored by the Duke. Given the loudness of the new instruments in the collection of the fourth Duke, it looks like his taste and that of his son Don Diego evolved towards a different kind of music and performance, outside of the church and more related to arms and hunting. Nevertheless, the presence of 4 chaplains and 6 chamber musicians (one keyboard, one *vihuela* and three *vihuela de arco* players) in the payrolls of the last years reveals an additional interest of these lords, or their wives, in softer sounds inside the Palace. Whatever the reality was, the presence of a greater number of *flautas* than of any other instrument in both collections, demonstrates the particular taste of the fourth Duke and his son for all members of the flute family.

17 BNE, MSS.MICRO/6743.