



# playing in **Spain**

## Midland organist performs 3 concerts during 10-day stay in Spain

**By Megan Lea Buck**  
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Through a social networking site, Midlander and professional organist Thomas Vozzella made contact with an organist on the other side of the globe last spring.

"This guy from Majorca, Spain asked to be on my MySpace," Vozzella recalled. "I saw he was an organist (and) I knew they had a festival there, so I asked what a person had to do to play at the festival." In September, his new friend sent Vozzella a message asking him if he was planning to come to Spain to perform during the music festival.

Vozzella holds a doctorate in musical arts from University of South Carolina and has studied at Nazarene Theological Seminary, University of Missouri, Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Royal School of Church Music in Croydon, England.

He has taught at universities in Louisiana, Tennessee, South Carolina, Alabama and Kansas and served as music director/organist in Massachusetts, Kansas, Missouri, Florida, Arkansas, Tennessee, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. Most recently he served as director of music at First United Methodist Church in Midland.

His musical career has allowed him to travel and perform in places such as Italy, Austria, Germany, France, England, Holland, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Ukraine.

In November, Vozzella traveled to the island of Majorca, Spain, to perform three organ concerts sponsored by the Musical Arts Foundation (ACA) of Spain.

Hosted by Amau Reynes Florit, organist at Basilica de San Francisco in Palma, Majorca, and Antoni Caimari, president of the ACA, Vozzella performed three concerts. Choosing mostly secular music for his performances, he played pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, George Fredrick Handel, Henry Purcell, Franz Joseph Haydn, Felix Mendelssohn, William Boyce and others.



At San Francisco Convent in Campos, Majorca, he played on an organ built in 1823 and at Colonia de San Pedro in Arta, Majorca, he played on an organ built in 2002. The organ on which he performed at Parish of San Pedro in Buger, Majorca dates back to 1763.

"It was just fascinating being in these churches that are hundreds of years old," Vozzella said. "The organs are hundreds of years old."

Noting he had never played on organs as old as the instruments he played at San Francisco Convent and Parish of San Pedro, Vozzella said he didn't know what to expect from the organs. "Some stops were sweet sounding and some were aggressive," he said of the older organs.

The physical aspects of playing the instruments also differed from what he is used to, he said, as one of the organs lacked space for his legs - forcing him into an upright position - while another was equipped with buttons instead of foot pedals.

"In America, the organs are AGO standard (American Guild of Organists) (and) in Europe it's whatever you want to do," he explained. "It would be the difference between driving a Wright Brothers plane and driving a jet."

The audience at one of Vozzella's concerts asked him to play three encores. "At one place it was standing-room only," he said. "You don't have that in America for organ concerts." Vozzella's concerts were part of a larger music festival on the island that featured 3 concerts during his 10-day stay.

While the ACA organized and facilitated the festival, the funds were provided by the government.

"All art, music, all those events are sponsored by the government," Vozzella said, adding organizations like the ACA cannot raise private funds. "They (ACA) put together the program and tell the government how much it's going to cost and then they pay you."

During his visit, Vozzella and his hosts attended Mass at the Monastery of de Liuc. "When we got to the monastery, there were people everywhere," he said, explaining his hosts led him through back hallways and living quarters to a balcony where they were able to enjoy the service in the company of only one other family.



His hosts also accompanied him on a tour of the mountains of the island and through several of the villages.

"What's interesting about Majorca is you can be in the mountains and then go to the beach," Vozzella said. "The water is crystal clear ... not blue or black, just turquoise. You can see the bottom of the Mediterranean."

Vozzella said the weather in Majorca was similar to mild West Texas, though the pace of daily life on the island differed from often chaotic America.



"Everything closes in the afternoon, they work in the morning, play all afternoon and then they go back to work in the evening," he said. "It's so quiet there at night, you can sit there and you don't hear anything but maybe a bird."

He described the food as similar to what one would expect near the Mediterranean with an abundance of wines and cheeses.

"What you buy is fresh," he said, explaining cafes and restaurants use only produce grown on the island.

With tourists contributing to the island's economy, Vozzella said the people of Majorca are some of the most courteous people he has ever met.

"Even if you couldn't speak Spanish, they didn't care, they just wanted to help you," he said. "They were very, very accommodating."

Before flying back to Texas, Vozzella visited the island's famed pearl factories to purchase a pearl necklace and bracelet for his daughter, Ashley, to wear on her wedding day.

"She is only 7 now, so it will be sometime before she knows about the pearls," he said.

Vozzella returned to Midland in time to spend Thanksgiving with his family, and tuck away the Majorcan pearls for his daughter's special day.