

EDITORIAL



The year was 1992 and a top British choir and orchestra were going to tour São Paulo and Minas Gerais to perform local music. A group of such standing doing the so-called colonial music of Brazil was something unheard of. Yet rumours circulated that its director was not very fond of it. When the concert was arranged, he was not familiar with that repertory, and when local musicologists presented him with some works that they thought appropriate for the tour, he was unimpressed. Even so, the concerts in São Paulo and São João del Rei were outstanding. The programme opened with the gradual *Angelus Domine*, a short piece by Manoel Dias de Oliveira (1734–1813), followed by the fairly well-known *Novena de Nossa Senhora do Pilar* (1789) by Francisco Gomes da Rocha (c1754–1808). This sectional work had been performed and recorded many times after Francisco Curt Lange's 1951 edition, but it had never sounded as focused, particularly in the string writing, which is unusually agitated by late eighteenth-century Mineiro standards. The concerts closed with the *Responsórios Fúnebres* (1831), a late unfinished work by João de Deus de Castro Lobo (1794–1832), whose life crossed the boundaries of the colonial period. In his youth he worked at Vila Rica's opera house – built in 1770 and still functioning – and operatic influences are noticeable in most of his works, even in a piece like this, written for a funeral service. In the *Responsórios Fúnebres* Castro Lobo uses a thick orchestral texture, with demanding vocal parts and frequent rhythmic-harmonic formulas aiming at the dramatic or grandiose – though within a compact structure dictated by liturgical needs.

Those performances were soon heralded as paradigms. Shortly afterwards, music festivals and recording labels in Europe became interested in colonial Brazil, and excellent recordings followed, especially those by Jean-Cristophe Frisch with Ensemble XVIII-21 (recorded on K617) and Luiz Alves da Silva with Ensemble Turicum (Claves and K617), also exploring the repertory of Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro. But musicologists in Brazil still treasure their cassette tapes, duplicated from a less than perfect recording of the São Paulo concert. They would later be converted into mp3 files and eventually find their way onto the iPods of many younger aficionados. Listening to that 1992 recording was one of the things that pushed me into historical musicology – the following year I would enrol in the graduate programme in musicology of the University of São Paulo.

Newspapers in São Paulo were unusually enthusiastic about the British group's concert, and almost everybody in São João del Rei loved them. Almost. During the gold rush of the early eighteenth century until the arrival of the Portuguese court in 1808, Minas Gerais was the centre of a thriving musical culture, with several dozens of composers and hundreds of performers catalogued in pioneering studies by Francisco Curt Lange. In São João del Rei and its neighbouring town Tiradentes – the birthplace of Manoel Dias de Oliveira – musical societies trace their activities back to the 1730s and proudly cherish the 1776 Lira Sanjoanense as the oldest continuously active orchestra in South America. It holds a remarkable archive of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century manuscript scores, including the earliest examples of Brazilian chamber music. So when local musicians and some of the most devoted Catholics of the region, who grew up attending feasts and processions accompanied by their two-hundred-year-old orchestras, went to that concert and listened to the British renditions of 'their' music, they felt a little uncomfortable. The music seemed too fast, too dance-like. What would happen if a procession were to follow that music? Would it turn into a Carnival parade? Besides, it was too 'perfect'. The performers' confidence was perceived by some as a distracting display of human arrogance. But Mineiros are usually tolerant with those who approach their traditions. A local musician confided that the British were really good – what they needed was a longer stay in the region so they could learn the proper way to perform that music.

Would it have been any different if a British group had visited the same region in 1792? Some locals would obviously have dismissed a perceived un-Catholic approach, but the sense of alienation from their own music would not be nearly as strong as in 1992, as the 1792 visitors would surely have been acquainted with the Neapolitan style then pervasive in Portugal and Brazil. What we know for certain is that a performance



given by the Companhia de Música, as the Lira Sanjoanense was known in the eighteenth century, would have sounded very different from a performance by their successors in 1992.

Competition was fierce among musicians in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais, and, judging by some tricky passages in Castro Lobo's music, particularly in his *Missa e Credo a Oito Vozes*, few major orchestras and choirs in Brazil today feature professionals with equivalent standards. Besides, we all know that many things changed during the nineteenth century in terms of musical performance and instrument-making. Another change is the conservative turn that the Catholic church took around 1870, with the Caecilian movement and the first Vatican Council. That certainly shaped a more pious and less flashy style of performing sacred music, even in remote Minas Gerais. On top of that, economic troubles during most of the nineteenth century forced many musicians to relocate to Rio de Janeiro, and that changed local performance practices, allowing for fewer displays of virtuosity.

If performance practices changed, the musical repertory, some of which dates back to the gold-rush era, never stopped being performed locally. Mineiro orchestras remained active probably because they were able to adapt and reinvent themselves, thus remaining meaningful and functional within their changing community. Musicologists may or may not like how these orchestras play, but we are all happy that they have retained some of the richest musical archives in Brazil.

But what if, in this process of reinventing themselves, the keepers of a specific musical repertory also modify it to make it more adequate to changing tastes and practices?

Here is another story. The Portuguese Theodoro Cyro de Sousa was only fifteen when he sailed to Brazil as the newly appointed chapel master of the Cathedral of Salvador, Bahia. The year was 1781. While he left some works at the Patriarchal Seminar in Lisbon, the *Motetos para os passos da procissão do Senhor* are his sole surviving works among many written in Brazil. In 1983 Alexandre Bispo published an edition based on an 1897 copy he found in the archive of a wind band in Alagoinhas, a town not too far from Salvador. The instrumentation did not correspond to late eighteenth-century Luso-Brazilian practices, and some of the winds were obviously added during the mid- or late nineteenth century to substitute for the strings at a time when wind bands were replacing orchestras in many provincial towns throughout Brazil (or when orchestras like the Lira Sanjoanense functioned as wind bands). In 1996 the work was performed and recorded by an orchestra of students and amateur musicians in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, after Sérgio Dias restored it to something approaching its 'original' state, with voices, wind and strings.

This story has interesting implications. At a conference some months after the concert, ethnomusicologist Manuel Veiga stated that the attempt at 'old-fashionizing' a living tradition did not make any sense to him. He questioned why some musicologists have such an aversion to practices of updating music, which are so common in virtually all musical traditions. An obvious and maybe cynical rejoinder would be that early music scholars and performers should surely be allowed to do their own updating (or downdating?) in order to make the music relevant to their own communities. Here is where we get to a phenomenon that Bastide, Hobsbawm, Taruskin and others have analysed under different names: we think that we are doing something very old, but in fact what we do is very new.

Brazilian archives hold many works in several stages of updating, from simple reorchestrations to recompositions of entire sections, but often maintaining the original identification of authorship. In most cases there is at least one autograph or copy prepared during the composer's lifetime, and these are the usual choices when establishing a text for a musical edition. However, that was not the case with the project Acervo da Música Brasileira, sponsored by the Archdiocese of Mariana and directed by Paulo Castagna. Mariana's Museu da Música holds one of the most impressive archives in the country, and the aim of the project was to edit some key works in the version that survived in their archives, even though an autograph of the same piece, sometimes with very different music, was known to exist in some other place. Thanks to that, we are able to study different versions of the same piece, even resorting to facsimile copies, since these are available on the Museu's website at <www.mmmariana.com.br/abertura.htm>. High-quality recordings accompanied each one of the collection's nine volumes. Castro Lobo's *Responsórios* were included in the volume and CD entitled *Música Fúnebre*. (The website offers audio samples of two



movements performed by Júlio Moretzsohn and Grupo Calíope, along with pdf scores and some images of the manuscripts.)

The issue of musical updating has always captivated me. Working with guitar and *salterio* tablatures and more recently with theatrical music in eighteenth-century Brazil and Portugal, it is fascinating to see how much a reworked score might tell us about musical practices, and the level of autonomy exercised by individuals when approaching the authority of a musical text. Unfortunately, some analytical and methodological tools might mislead us into classifying everything as a kind of adulteration or corruption. As popular music scholars and ethnomusicologists have already discovered, one of the most pressing tasks when encountering a previously unstudied repertory is to develop an analytical approach that can be sensitive to the music under consideration, without coercing undue or culturally inappropriate value judgments.

But it is not only when dealing with practices of reworking that some forms of analysis are not very helpful. One last story. In a previous editorial in this journal, Manuel Carlos de Brito considered some aspects of Mozart reception in Portugal. Historically, the distaste, or at least lack of enthusiasm, for his music in that country did not come out of an anti-hegemonic resistance to the beginnings of an inexorable German invasion of the Western musical canon. Audiences simply wanted more singable melodies and a thinner orchestral texture, and performers wanted clearer spots for ornamentation. Even so, while Mozart's operas were not very successful in Portugal and Brazil, his Requiem was performed several times in Lisbon during the early nineteenth century and even in Rio de Janeiro in 1819, conducted by local composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia, with a new ending written by Sigismund Neukomm when he was living there. Even considering the relative success of at least one of his sacred works, I have the impression that if we approach the kind of music composed for audiences who were not too fond of Mozart equipped with the largely nineteenth-century Germanic analytical tools that developed precisely to establish Mozart's style as paradigmatic, we might well get a biased picture: when analysing music composed in Minas Gerais or Rio de Janeiro we would find only superficial similarities with the Viennese classical style, and when analysing Mozart we might overlook features that made audiences yawn in early nineteenth-century Lisbon. Looking for a place for Mineiro music in the Western canon, Francisco Curt Lange fell into a similar trap. Rather than exploring the Neapolitan models absorbed by Portuguese composers and then exported to the colony, he traced flawed connections with Mannheim, Bohemia and even the early Haydn.

Cultural and contextual approaches are logical choices when studying the musical practices of Portugal and its South American colony, especially if we consider issues of ethnicity and power. At the same time, textual analysis of the music is still necessary if one wants to draw any useful picture of the musical output of a given composer, region or period, to identify anonymous works, stylistic trends or even schools and deal with issues of continuity and change. That is, of course, if we still deem those things necessary. It is easy to dismiss Iberian and Latin American musicology as too positivistic – as I often hear – but we actually need even more archival work and manuscript studies. In spite of the large quantity of eighteenth-century music manuscripts scattered through dozens of archives in Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, we do not have enough editions, catalogues or even biographies. Even the work done by a handful of musicologists of previous generations needs to be systematically reassessed.

And there is the human dimension of studying a repertory that helped shape the memory of a remote community and in some cases still plays a significant role in its everyday rituals. What compensation do we offer when we build a career studying the music of a group that has preserved it and kept it functional for two centuries? Should we 'fix' their music? When we first hear a Mineiro wind band playing outdoors during a religious festival or, indeed, one of their old orchestras, we are not very sure what we are dealing with. We might know the instruments and that the music follows patterns of European phrase structure and common-practice harmony that are familiar to us, but some things do not feel quite right. Tuning, tempos, articulation, ornamentation, sometimes even the instrumentation might approach what we usually classify as 'traditional' music or music from an 'oral tradition' (when not simply amateurish), while other aspects will collide with our expectations and, I would hope, open our minds to different ways of thinking.



Editing and especially performing this repertory pushes us into dangerous ethical territory. Often our choices and priorities would be different from those of communities who cherish that repertory as a living tradition, and how we approach their repertory, orchestras and bands is a delicate issue. Some exchange will inevitably take place and the negotiation that follows might be fruitful for both sides, but it could easily result in a blow to the locals' self-esteem, with harmful consequences, especially if it involves displays of economic and technological power. Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have been discussing this issue for decades without reaching an agreement on how much interference should be allowed and under what circumstances. On the other hand, most of the time people living in remote or rural communities are savvier than we urban and academic creatures might assume. If they find our discourse about culture and heritage useful they will soon incorporate it and remodel it to fit their own needs.

As a matter of fact, in recent decades there have been ethically sound and musically fruitful collaborations between musicologists and some communities in Minas Gerais, each one aware of the other's priorities and accepting their diverging aesthetics. In a still incipient fashion, musicologists are finding ways to apply the principle of giving back to the community while conducting their research. The commonest and easiest way to do this has been to set aside a number of volumes of edited scores or CDs to be marketed by the archive holders or caretakers. Since not all music in a given archive is still played by local bands or orchestras, published scores and concert performances of forgotten pieces are ways that communities get to know exactly what they have in their history, and they may thus reincorporate this music into their living tradition – aware that they might be inventing a tradition, as Hobsbawm put it. This is all very different from half a century ago, when some musicologists still had the habit of touring inland, buying musical archives and keeping them for their own use, often portraying themselves as heroes into the bargain.

This is not to say that it would ever be possible or desirable to dissociate myself from the complex, historically mediated collection of attitudes and preferences that come with being a twentieth-first-century musicologist. I must say that I still prefer Süßmayr's ending to Mozart's Requiem to Neukomm's. It is perfectly natural that adjectives such as 'peculiar' or 'odd' come to our minds when hearing the old orchestras from Minas Gerais performing their standard repertory, but regarding them as a pale reflection of what they once were is just simplistic. They are still fulfilling a liturgical role as much as their counterparts in the eighteenth century used to do, even though the Church, its liturgy and even the Mineiro musical taste have changed. If we still do not know how to deal with that, why don't we spend some time there? One musician in São João del Rei has already said he would welcome us.

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