

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. BORISLAVA TANEVA

Piano Department, Instrumental Faculty, National Academy of Music “Prof. Pancho Vladigerov”, Sofia

of

the dissertation entitled

“CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE BRAZILIAN WALTZ: THE NATIONAL MUSICAL LANGUAGE in the Valsa de Esquina No.2, Valsa de Esquina No.5, Valsa de Esquina No.8, and Valsa-Chôro No.5 by FRANCISCO MIGNONE”

by PAULO RICARDO SOARES ZEREU,

a Doctoral Candidate in the New Bulgarian University,

to obtain the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Major 8.3 Music and Dance Arts

Paulo Zereu is a Brazilian pianist and educator who for the past 15 years lives and works in Bangkok. He developed as a music performer and educator in Brazil and Europe (Poland, Germany). He received his first piano tuition from his mother, Prof. Déa Zereu and later continued his studies with Prof. Lucila di Primio Conceição at the State University of Rio Grande do Sul (in the Institute of Arts) from where he graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Music. Subsequently he became professor of piano at the same university.

During the 1980's he won a scholarship by the Polish government to pursue post-graduate studies at the Kraków Academy of Music (Poland) under the supervision of Prof. Ewa Bukojemska and Prof. Jerzy Tosik-Warszawiak. From 1990 he lived in Karlsruhe (Germany) where he studied at the University of Music Karlsruhe. From 1994 he studied under the supervision of Prof. Josef Anton Scherrer at the Wuppertal branch of the Cologne University of Music from where he graduated with Künstlerische Abschlussprüfung (Final Artistic Examination). Thereafter he studied music education at the Akademie für Musikpädagogik in Mainz, Germany.

For the completion of his development as a musician he participated in numerous in master classes with internationally renowned teachers such as: Edith Picht-Axenfeld (Germany), Andrzej Jasiński (Poland), Rudolf Kehrer (Russia), Martin Widmaier (Germany), and Krystian Zimerman (Poland).

In 2005 Paulo Zereu relocated to Bangkok, Thailand. In recognition of the presence of Zereu in the Brazilian cultural scene Paulo Zereu was awarded an invitation to support the cultural activities of the Embassy of Brazil for the duration of one year in his capacity as a permanent performer. As proof of the international significance of his artistic personality he received an invitation to become resident artist and music adviser to the Cultural Services of the Embassy of Portugal in Bangkok, Thailand, for the duration of three years. Doctoral candidate Zereu also participated in other international projects such as a member of the Council of the Brazilian Expatriates in Bangkok to the Consular Section of the Embassy of Brazil in Bangkok.

Paulo Zereu has recorded for Radio Nacional of Madrid in the series “Spanish Composers”. As a soloist he appeared with orchestras in Brazil, Europe, and Asia. The doctoral candidate also conducted several courses of piano interpretation in Brazil, Germany, and Asia.

Paulo Zereu is a winner of international Piano Competitions in Brazil and Europe.

I do not think that the choice of topic by the doctoral candidate is accidental. After long years spent in Europe and Asia, the return to one’s roots and the desire to contribute to one’s native culture is a natural process and often – a moral necessity.

Having started his musical education in his homeland and having worked in Brazil for some time, Zereu consciously focused on exploring a genre from the work of one of the most important composers, actively composing in Brazil.

The composer Francisco Paulo Mignone (September 3, 1897, São Paulo – February 19, 1986, Rio de Janeiro) has been recognized by critics as one of the greatest representatives of Brazilian classical music. Eloquent proof of this is that in 1968 Francisco Mignone was chosen as Brazilian composer of the year. Like Zereu, Francisco Mignone developed as a musician on two continents – South America and Europe (Milan). But unlike Zereu Mignone returned to his homeland in 1929 and remained there for the rest of his life.

The music of Mignone is full of nuances and lyrics but at the same time shows strong impulses towards improvisation. Most of his early works are melodic and tonal, which is typical of popular and folk music and which the composer was keenly interested in. Later he expanded his search in different styles, and in a certain period even reached serial music.

Mignone was a versatile and diverse composer – he composed not only in the genre of the solo song and choral art, but also added a multitude of chamber, instrumental and orchestra works, five operas and eight ballets.

The works for piano solo occupied a significant part of his work. He was particularly interested in the waltz genre. He wrote a total of 61 waltzes for piano solo. Among the most important compositional examples of this genre are "Twenty-Four Brazilian Waltzes", "Twelve Valsa-Chôro" and "Twelve Valsa de Esquina", which are considered Mignone's greatest contribution to the Brazilian piano repertoire. It is to these that the research of the doctoral candidate of NBU Paulo Zereu is involved with.

The work of the doctoral candidate is a total of 182 pages, 165 of which are as follows: introductory summary of the work, the four main chapters, conclusion, musical examples of the representative piano pieces, and the titles of three publications by Paulo Zereu. The contributions of the dissertation are also presented and a list of the candidate's concert performances, master classes, and seminars in which he has participated is attached. The reference sources are correctly cited; attached is a bibliography of the cited literature, which includes 106 sources written in three languages as well as the biography of the doctoral candidate.

The main study development, as I mentioned earlier, is divided into four chapters, entitled respectively:

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WALTZ IN BRAZIL

III. FRANCISCO MIGNONE (1897-1986)

IV. OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF SELECTED WALTZES FOR PIANO SOLO BY FRANCISCO MIGNONE (1897-1986)

The summary clearly outlines the intentions of the doctoral candidate. The subject and objectives of the research, namely "*to identify the socio-cultural factors that influenced the waltz genre in Brazil*", are correctly presented. The aspects, language, and musical significance determining the creation and the role of the "Brazilian" waltz in the classical music of the country are specified.

In the first chapter - *Introduction*, the rather complex topic of Brazilian music emerges an inhomogeneous in its development explosive mixture between African, European, and local music, difficult to analyze, especially given the fact that the country is huge, and often two neighboring regions have nothing in common in the development of musical genres. This is where the main goal of the study is to "*identify the characteristics that influence the Brazilian waltz.*" The object of the research is argued and the tasks are described. The research questions asked and the definitions of the terms used are precise and clear. Here, too, Zereu justifies the relevance of his work. I find that indeed the study "*would help young composers and performers, teachers, and students to better understand Brazilian music and the Brazilian waltz, which would lead to a new perspective for the interpretation of the Brazilian musical culture.*" A concise but correct overview of the origin and history of the waltz genre has been made, and, of course, the doctoral candidate focuses specifically on piano waltzes.

The second chapter is dedicated to the development of the genre in Brazil. I admit that I was very interested in the doctoral candidate's analysis of the genres *Modinha*, *Lundu* and *Serenata* - in fact, the first appearances of popular urban music in Brazil. I admire Zereu's approach toward the core of the study matter. Involving smoothly, from the general to the particular, without unnecessarily diluting the topic, but on the contrary – consciously focusing more and more effectively on the object of research.

It was in this chapter that the doctoral candidate logically arrived at an analysis of the genre "*Chôro*" – the first urban music genre in Brazil and also a genre in which is written one of Mignone's waltzes being a subject of special consideration in the study. The origins and influence of the "*Chôro*" genre on Brazilian music are examined in detail.

The next two subsections in this main chapter are devoted to the waltz in Brazil and the Brazilian waltz. A clear distinction is made between these two concepts. The path of the waltz genre from Europe to its appearance in Brazil in 1808 is thoroughly and scientifically traced. It is concluded that the waltz in Brazil was brought directly from Vienna and definitely had an aristocratic origin associated with the royal palace in São Cristóvão, Rio de Janeiro. The path of the genre in Brazil is traced. It is proven that it "*spreads among all social classes, adapting to all musical spheres: classical, popular, and folk.*"

The differences of the Brazilian waltz from its European prototype are explained and scientifically derived. The path of emancipation of the Brazilian waltz and the specifics that emerged as a result of the inevitable contact with the diverse local culture are traced.

In the third chapter, a special place is awarded the composer of the waltzes considered in the research – Francisco Mignone. The doctoral candidate uses the same method here – first setting the general broad cultural and social framework, then gradually focusing on the specifics of the tasks. Special attention is paid to Mignone's contemporaries who worked in the field of the Brazilian waltz genre. Then follows the biographical data of Mignone himself. With great care, the doctoral candidate Zereu describes the atmosphere in which Mignone was actively composing during the 1940's and 1950's. The various components of urban culture from that time are presented. Special attention is paid to the twelve plays in the collections “*Valsa de Esquina*”, which add a "completely new sound" emphasizing improvisation as well as the specific nostalgia as a bright feature of the genre. Leaning on the musical text Zereu logically concludes that *Valsa de Esquina* by Francisco Mignone are "strongly influenced by the romantic and sentimental atmosphere of *serenades, modinhas, and choro*."

The last two subsections in this chapter are devoted to the hermeneutical reading of a musical text and to the extremely interesting features of the Brazilian musical language, making it so specific and colorful.

The last of the main chapters is called "Selected waltzes for piano solo by the Brazilian composer Francisco Mignone". The albums “*Valsa chôros*” and “*Valsa de Esquina*”, which include the works, subject of the research, are examined in detail.

A thorough review is conducted for all of them; notes on the interpretation, piano methodical practice, recommendation for a specific fingering for selected parts and bars, as well as instructions for pedaling in piano performance.

The conclusion summarizes the analyzes in the study under consideration. They are valuable in many aspects:

- professional reflections on the role of the "*waltz*", viewed from a historical and national perspective;
- the harmonic and morphological analyses, which definitely give a much better understanding of the composer Mignone;

- the connection with the *Serenade* and hence the proof of a greater truth from an interpreter's perspective;
 - provision of a number of specific solutions to technical and performer problems;
 - the choice of plays which unconditionally have a high artistic value, contributing to a wide international recognition;
- and last, but not least, the opportunity that the work of the doctoral candidate gives, namely:
- a sufficiently extensive and professionally developed base is created, which can be a starting point for future research.

I agree with Zereu's *contributions* to the study, noting that most important in this case is the discovery of a new perspective on the interpretation and fundamental towards Brazilian music around the world. In his scientific reasoning the doctoral candidate shows individual attitude, great respect, and responsibility for the researched object.

The doctoral candidate reasonably enters and explains the etymological and morphological layers of this beautiful and naturally composed matter.

The structure of the text and its chapters are logically shaped and constructed. Paulo Zereu demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the object of research, which naturally leads to a major contribution to the research process and to reaching a number of important conclusions.

I can't help but mention the fact that I know Paulo Zereu personally as a pianist from the concert podium. I have direct impressions of the professional work of the pianist Paulo Zereu; as two years ago I had the opportunity to play with him and the New Symphony Orchestra “Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra” by Francis Poulenc.

Based on all of the above and in connection with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), I absolutely confirm that the applicant fully meets the minimum national requirements set out in the Regulations for the implementation of LDASRB. I would recommend that the esteemed Scientific Committee award the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Major 8.3 Music and Dance Arts to Paulo Zereu, as I give my positive assessment of the work of the candidate on the candidacy.

Sofia, 18.10.2020.

Prof. Dr. Borislava Taneva