

NAXOS
THE MUSIC OF
BRAZIL

Alberto
NEPOMUCENO
Symphony in G minor
O Garatuja – Prelude • Série Brasileira



Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra
Fabio Mechetti

About This Series

The series The Music of Brazil is part of the project *Brasil em Concerto*, developed by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to promote music by Brazilian composers dating back to the 18th century. Around 100 orchestral works from the 19th and 20th centuries will be recorded by the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra, the Goiás Philharmonic Orchestra and the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra. Further recordings of chamber and vocal music will gradually be added to this collection.


The works were selected according to their historical importance for Brazilian music and the existence of recordings. Most of the works recorded for the series have never had recordings available outside Brazil; many others will have their world premiere recordings. An important part of the project is the preparation of new or even first editions of the works to be recorded, many of which, despite their relevance, have only been available in the composer's manuscript. This work will be carried out by the Brazilian Academy of Music and by musicologists working together with the orchestras.



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Alberto Nepomuceno (1864–1920)

O Garatuja – Prelude • Série Brasileira • Symphony in G minor

Alberto Nepomuceno is a central figure in the history of Brazilian music. His work as a composer, conductor and educator were key to the development of Brazil's music in the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries.

Born in 1864, Nepomuceno spent his childhood and adolescence in two of the major cities in Northeast Brazil, his native Fortaleza and Recife. At the age of 18, still a student, he became director of concerts at Clube Carlos Gomes in Recife, and also became politically active, having strong anti-monarchy and abolitionist opinions. In 1884, he moved to Rio de Janeiro, and in the following year made his debut as a pianist at the Beethoven Club, an establishment that spearheaded musical creation and diverse instrumental genres.

In 1888, with the patronage of the sculptor Rodolfo Bernardelli (1852–1931), Nepomuceno left for a seven-year sojourn of studying in Europe, travelling to Rome, Berlin, Vienna and Paris, and being taught by eminent tutors. In 1893, he married pianist Walborg Bang, a student of Edvard Grieg – a composer with whom Nepomuceno developed a lasting friendship, and who inspired him to seek the creation of a Brazilian musical heritage. In this regard, Nepomuceno embraced the mission of modernising the Brazilian musical environment when he returned to the country in 1895, questioning the culture of his time while simultaneously seeking to bring it closer to its roots. He also devoted himself to teaching, having taken over as director of the National Institute of Music, where his innovative concepts were faced with resistance from his contemporaries (in 1916 Nepomuceno translated Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony* into Portuguese, with the intention of implementing it in the institute's curriculum). As conductor of the Popular Concert Association, Nepomuceno premiered contemporary works by European composers in Brazil, such as Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, while at the same time performing concerts in Europe to promote Brazilian music. He set about recovering the work of José Maurício Nunes Garcia

(1767–1830), one of the main Brazilian composers of the colonial period, and championed the career of the young Heitor Villa-Lobos, publishing and conducting some of his early works. As a tireless director and supporter of the most important musical entities of Rio de Janeiro, Nepomuceno played a decisive role in the musical culture of his country. As a notable teacher and mentor, he led disciples such as Luciano Gallet and Lorenzo Fernandez, both of whom rank among the most important composers in Brazilian music.

The modernist critique of the end of the first half of the 20th century consecrated Alberto Nepomuceno as a herald of Brazilian musical nationalism. The composer was one of the first to systematically employ elements of Brazilian folklore in his compositions, and undertook an intense campaign for singing in Portuguese, facing a harsh reaction from critics who considered the language inappropriate for the lyrical genre. His deep interest in Brazilian literature and appreciation of the Portuguese language in song lyrics brought him closer to important writers of the time, such as Coelho Neto, Machado de Assis and Olavo Bilac. Nepomuceno said, 'There is no nation for a people who do not sing in their own language.' He composed 53 songs with lyrics in Portuguese, plus two dozen others in French, Italian, German and even Swedish.

In the context of Nepomuceno's work, the nationalistic aspect only represented one creative facet, as this prolific composer had a remarkable ability to reconcile, in a very personal language, the different schools of composition that influenced him.

Nepomuceno died in Rio de Janeiro in 1920, a few days after Richard Strauss conducted the prelude to *O Garatuja*, a lyric comedy based on the work by José de Alencar, with a libretto by Nepomuceno himself, in the Theatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro. Nepomuceno began composing *O Garatuja* in 1904. The music, using popular motifs from 17th century Rio de Janeiro, was intended to introduce a truly Brazilian lyric comedy based on the local

setting, featuring up to date use of the Portuguese language and the appreciation of Brazilian rhythms such as the syncopation of the *maxixe* and *lundu*. The work remained unfinished; only the *Prelude* and the first act were completed. The debut of the *Prelude*, which eventually became one of Nepomuceno's best-known compositions, took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1904, under the direction of the composer himself.

At the age of 27, in Berlin, where he studied with the Austrian composer Heinrich von Herzogenberg (1843–1900), a great friend of Brahms, Nepomuceno composed the *Série Brasileira* ('Brazilian Suite') for orchestra, in four parts. The first, *Alvorada na serra* ('Dawn at the Mountains'), employs the Amazonian folkloric theme *Sapo cururu* in a very lightly orchestrated piece, with a predominance of the woodwinds and an important part for harp solo. The second part is an *Intermédio* ('Intermezzo'), which is an orchestration of the *Allegretto* of the composer's *Third String Quartet*, titled '*Brasileiro*', introducing the vivacity of the rhythms of a *maxixe*. In the third part, *Sesta na rede* ('Napping in a Hammock'), Nepomuceno achieves delightful effects in the simulation of the lazy hammock swing and in the use of modal melodic lines that refer to the music of Northeast Brazil. Contrasting with this atmosphere, the *Série Brasileira* ends with the famous *Batuque* (a dance of African origin brought to Brazil by slaves), to this day one of Nepomuceno's most popular works, which is often performed separately. The piece is rhythmically vigorous, with humorous touches, and concludes the suite feverishly. In the orchestration of this piece, Nepomuceno included a *reco-reco* for the first time in the percussion section, an instrument similar to the *güiro* of other Latin American countries, which infuriated some of the more orthodox critics of the period.

The *Série Brasileira* was first performed in Brazil in 1897, in the same concert in which another work by Nepomuceno was also premiered, the *Symphony in G minor*, composed in 1893. The pieces signalled two primordial aspects of his production: the *Série Brasileira* was a milestone in nationalist Brazilian music, and the symphony showcased the admirable craftsmanship that reflected the technical mastery acquired by the composer during long years of European studies and the influence of Brahms, especially in the first movement.

Nepomuceno's *Symphony in G minor* is one of the earliest Brazilian symphonies, and certainly the most successful of that period, and it is still performed relatively often by Brazilian orchestras. The work opens with an energetic *Allegro con entusiasmo* in G minor, in 6/4, with two alternating themes in rigorous development in sonata form, the first being in G minor, of a more heroic character, and the second, in B flat major, more lyrical. The second movement, *Andante quasi adagio*, in C major, opens with an extensive and ardent theme led by the strings which, after a *Più mosso* episode led by the oboes, returns in the whole orchestra in a grand *Maestoso* that precedes the quiet coda. The third movement is a vigorous *Scherzo* in B flat major in 3/4, ingeniously orchestrated, with a brief lyrical *Intermezzo* in D sharp minor. In the *Con fuoco* of the fourth movement, in G minor and in 4/4, the vibrant theme of the opening, announced by the brass, contrasts strongly with the delicate episodes alternating violins and flutes. The symphony closes triumphantly with a coda in G major.

Paulo Sérgio Malheiros dos Santos and Gustavo de Sá

English translation: Stela Brandão

Alberto Nepomuceno (1864–1920)

O Garatuja – Prelude • Série Brasileira • Sinfonia em sol menor

Alberto Nepomuceno foi certamente uma figura central na vida musical brasileira, na transição entre os séculos XIX e XX. Isso se deve não apenas à importância de sua obra como compositor, mas também pela sua atuação como educador e regente, assim como ao seu engajamento na modernização do meio musical brasileiro.

Nascido em 1864, Nepomuceno passou a infância e a adolescência no Nordeste do Brasil – em Fortaleza, sua cidade natal, e no Recife. Aos dezoito anos, ainda estudante, tornou-se diretor de concertos do Clube Carlos Gomes, de Recife, ao mesmo tempo em que se engajou politicamente na defesa das causas republicana e abolicionista. Em 1884, foi para o Rio de Janeiro. No ano seguinte fez sua estreia como pianista no Clube Beethoven, associação pioneira na então capital do Império do Brasil no cultivo da criação musical e dos gêneros instrumentais.

Em 1888, graças ao mecenato do escultor Rodolfo Bernardelli, Nepomuceno partiu para uma temporada de sete anos de estudos na Europa, entre Roma, Berlim, Viena e Paris, com eminentes mestres. Casou-se em 1893 com a pianista Walborg Bang, uma aluna de Edvard Grieg, compositor com quem Nepomuceno viria a desenvolver amizade duradoura e que o inspiraria a buscar a criação de um patrimônio musical brasileiro. Nesse sentido, de volta ao Brasil, em 1895, Nepomuceno abraçou a missão de modernizar o ambiente musical no país, com um questionamento estético da cultura de seu tempo, ao mesmo tempo em que buscou aproximá-la das raízes brasileiras. Dedicou-se também ao ensino, tendo assumido a direção do Instituto Nacional de Música, onde seu pensamento renovador enfrentou resistência de seus contemporâneos (em 1916, traduziu o *Tratado de Harmonia* de Schoenberg, com a intenção de implantá-lo no currículo do Instituto). Como maestro da Associação de Concertos Populares, Nepomuceno estreou no Brasil obras contemporâneas de compositores europeus, como o *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, de Debussy, ao mesmo tempo em que, na Europa, realizou concertos

para divulgar a música brasileira. Iniciou o trabalho de recuperação da obra do Padre José Maurício Nunes Garcia, um dos principais compositores brasileiros do período colonial, e promoveu a carreira do então jovem Villa-Lobos, publicando e regendo a primeira audição de algumas de suas obras. Como incansável dirigente e incentivador das mais importantes entidades musicais do Rio de Janeiro, Alberto Nepomuceno teve atuação determinante para a cultura musical de seu país. Como professor e orientador notável, deixou discípulos como Luciano Gallet e Lorenzo Fernandez, ambos criadores que figuram entre os mais importantes da música brasileira.

A crítica modernista do final da primeira metade do século XX consagrou Alberto Nepomuceno como um arauto do nacionalismo musical brasileiro. O compositor foi dos primeiros a empregar sistematicamente elementos do folclore brasileiro em suas composições e empreendeu uma intensa campanha pelo canto em Português, enfrentando a reação violenta de críticos que consideravam esse idioma impróprio para a canção lírica. Seu grande interesse pela literatura brasileira e pela valorização da canção em língua portuguesa aproximou-o de importantes escritores da época, estabelecendo parcerias com Coelho Netto, Machado de Assis e Olavo Bilac. Nepomuceno dizia que "não tem pátria um povo que não canta em sua língua". Compôs cinquenta e três canções com texto em português, além de duas dezenas de outras em francês, italiano, alemão e até sueco.

No contexto da obra de Nepomuceno, os aspectos nacionalizantes representam apenas uma possibilidade estética, entre muitas outras, já que uma das características mais marcantes desse prolífico compositor é a capacidade de conciliar, em uma linguagem bastante pessoal e numa feitura de escrita muito sólida, as diversas escolas de composição que o influenciaram ao longo de sua formação.

Nepomuceno morreu no Rio de Janeiro, em 1920, poucos dias após Richard Strauss ter regido no Theatro

Municipal do Rio de Janeiro o prelúdio de *O Garatuja*, comédia lírica baseada na obra homônima de José de Alencar. A composição dessa ópera, com libreto do próprio Nepomuceno, iniciou-se em 1904. A música, utilizando motivos populares do Rio de Janeiro do século XVII, destinava-se a introduzir uma comédia lírica verdadeiramente brasileira quanto à ambientação carioca, à utilização atualizada da língua portuguesa e à valorização dos ritmos populares nacionais, como a marcação sincopada do *maxixe* e do *lundu*. A obra permaneceu inacabada, restando dela apenas o prelúdio e o primeiro ato. A estreia do Prelúdio, que veio a ser uma das mais conhecidas composições de Nepomuceno, se deu no Rio de Janeiro, em 1904, sob a direção do autor.

Aos vinte e sete anos, em Berlim – onde estudou com o compositor austríaco Heinrich von Herzogenberg, grande amigo de Brahms –, Nepomuceno compôs a *Série Brasileira*, para orquestra, em quatro partes: a primeira, *Alvorada na Serra*, emprega o tema folclórico amazonense *Sapo Cururu* numa peça de orquestração muito leve, com predomínio das madeiras e um importante solo de harpa. A segunda parte é um *Intermezzo*, orquestração do *Allegretto* do *Quarteto de cordas n.º 3* do compositor, intitulado “Brasileiro”, introduzindo a vivacidade do ritmo de *maxixe*. Na terceira parte, *Sesta na Rede*, Nepomuceno consegue saborosos efeitos na simulação do preguiçoso balanço da rede e no emprego de linhas melódicas modais que remetem à música do Nordeste do Brasil. Contrastando com essa atmosfera, a *Série Brasileira* termina com o famoso *Batuque* (*dança de negros*), até hoje uma das peças mais populares e executadas do compositor. Ritmicamente vigorosa, com toques humorísticos, ela conclui a suíte de forma febril. Na orquestração do *Batuque*, Nepomuceno incluiu pela primeira vez na seção de percussão um *reco-reco*, instrumento de origem popular aparentado ao *güiro* de outros países da América Latina, o que enfureceu a crítica mais ortodoxa da época.

A *Série Brasileira* foi apresentada em primeira audição no Brasil em 1897, no mesmo concerto em que também foi estreada outra obra de Nepomuceno, a *Sinfonia em sol menor*, composta em 1893. As peças sinalizavam dois aspectos primordiais de sua produção: na *Série Brasileira*, o marco inicial para a orientação nacionalista da música brasileira, e, na *Sinfonia*, a admirável feitura artesanal que refletia a maestria técnica adquirida pelo compositor em longos anos de aprendizado europeu e as influências de Brahms, principalmente no primeiro movimento. A *Sinfonia em sol menor* de Nepomuceno é uma das primeiras sinfonias brasileiras, e certamente a mais bem-sucedida desse período, sendo executada com relativa frequência por orquestras brasileiras. A obra se abre com um enérgico *Allegro*. Com *entusiasmo*, em 6/4, com dois temas alternados em rigoroso desenvolvimento de forma sonata, sendo o primeiro, em sol menor, de caráter mais heroico, e o segundo, em si bemol maior, mais lírico. O segundo movimento, *Andantino quasi adagio*, em dó maior, se abre com um extenso e ardente tema conduzido pelas cordas que, após um episódio *Più mosso* liderado pelos oboés, retorna em toda a orquestra num grandioso *Maestoso* que antecede a tranquila coda. O terceiro movimento, *Presto*, é um vigoroso *scherzo* em si bemol maior, em 3/4, engenhosamente orquestrado, com um breve *intermezzo* lírico em ré sustenido menor. No *Con fuoco* do quarto movimento, em sol menor, 4/4, o vibrante tema da abertura, anunciado pelos metais, contrasta fortemente com os delicados episódios alternando violinos e flautas. A sinfonia se encerra de forma triunfal numa coda em sol maior.

Paulo Sérgio Malheiros dos Santos e Gustavo de Sá

Fabio Mechetti



Photo: Eugênio Sávio

www.fabiomechetti.com

Brazilian conductor, Fabio Mechetti, was appointed music director and principal conductor of the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra in 2008. He recently concluded a 14-year tenure with the Jacksonville Symphony, and is currently music director emeritus. He was the first Brazilian to become director of an Asian orchestra when he was appointed principal conductor of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. Mechetti also led the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra for ten seasons and was subsequently named music director laureate. In addition to his Carnegie Hall debut with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra in 1993, Mechetti has appeared as guest conductor with orchestras such as the Seattle, Rome and BBC Scottish Symphony orchestras, the Buffalo and Rochester Philharmonic orchestras, and various orchestras in Mexico, Spain, Brazil and Venezuela. He has toured Japan with the Tokyo, Sapporo and Hiroshima Symphony orchestras and is a frequent guest of orchestras in Scandinavia. Winner of the Malko Competition, Denmark in 1989, Mechetti served as resident conductor of the San Diego Symphony in 1986 and associate conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra from 1985 to 1989. Mechetti has Master's degrees in both conducting and composition from The Juilliard School.

Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra



Photo: Rafael Motta

The Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra was created in 2008 in order to promote orchestral music in Brazil and abroad. Artistic excellence and dynamic programming are at the heart of the group's work. The orchestra comprises 90 musicians from all over Brazil, Europe, Asia and the Americas, and has received the *Concerto Magazine Award* in 2015, the Carlos Gomes Award for Best Brazilian Orchestra in 2012, and was named Best Classical Music Ensemble of the Year by the São Paulo Association of Art Critics (APCA) in 2010. In 2009, music director and principal conductor Fabio Mechetti was honoured with the Carlos Gomes Award for Best Brazilian Conductor. The orchestra rehearses and performs at the Minas Gerais Hall, Belo Horizonte. In addition to its season there, it also tours the state of Minas Gerais and throughout Brazil during the year. Outreach programmes promote audience development through educational concerts and outdoor concerts in the parks and squares of Belo Horizonte and across Minas Gerais, and the orchestra takes pride in its commitment to fostering Brazilian talent, commissioning new music every season and hosting annual workshops for young conductors and composers.

www.filarmonica.art.br/en

Alberto Nepomuceno was a herald of Brazilian musical nationalism. He was one of the first composers in his country to employ elements of folklore in his compositions, he encouraged younger composers such as Villa-Lobos, and his music was conducted by Richard Strauss. The Prelude to *O Garatuja*, an incomplete opera, is one of his best-known works and an example of a truly Brazilian lyric comedy. *Série Brasileira* is a vivacious suite that employs *maxixe* rhythms and ends with the feverish batuque dance, while the *Symphony in G minor* is one of the earliest such examples by a Brazilian, a heroic and lyric structure revealing the influence of Brahms.



Alberto
NEPOMUCENO
(1864–1920)



1	O Garatuja – Prelude (1904)	9:12
	Série Brasileira (‘Brazilian Suite’) (1891)	24:52
2	I. Alvorada na serra (‘Dawn at the Mountains’)	10:07
3	II. Intermédio (‘Intermezzo’)	6:13
4	III. Sesta na rede (‘Napping in a Hammock’)	4:55
5	IV. Batuque	3:37
	Symphony in G minor (1893)	33:43
6	I. Allegro con entusiasmo	10:08
7	II. Andante quasi adagio	8:26
8	III. Scherzo – Intermezzo – Scherzo	6:54
9	IV. Con fuoco	8:15

Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra • Fabio Mechetti

The series *The Music of Brazil* is an initiative of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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