



# Treasures from the New World

## Volume 2

The story of art music – indeed, of all art – in South America in the 60-to-70 years surrounding the dawn of the 20th century is closely bound up with the emergence of the continent's independent sovereign nations from the grip of European imperial states.

In many respects, this was a reflection of the movement towards national independence in Europe. Perhaps in no other South American country than Brazil do we see such a strong drive towards artistic independence – in large part perhaps due to the immense size of that great country – alongside still-current ties with significant European centres of art. The European empires have disappeared – the independent country of Brazil was finally established in 1889 – yet two aspects remain which are by no means as fully appreciated as they perhaps ought to be.

The first is that those creative artists of the time – and, in our case, composers of music – who wished to study their subject further were more often obliged to travel to Europe to do so. There was no genuine objection to or restriction on fledgling musicians from taking such advantages, but the second aspect is a purely national one, which – even today – has made the understanding of South American art music not as fully appreciated as perhaps it might be. This was the absence of any British territory of major significance on the American continent, with the result that it was the Hispanic languages – not English –

which became the continent's spoken and written norms, a practical barrier to trans-continental understanding which still exists in part to this day.

In addition, of course, in purely musical terms, South American composers would tend to gravitate towards those institutions and seats of learning with the greater connexions to their homelands – the result was that the vast majority of musical students from South America who did travel to Europe made their way to the established conservatoires of Spain and France rather than those of Austria, Germany or Great Britain.

It was a natural progression, but not wholly exclusively. Not all young students came from Hispanic stock, as the music of the first composer in our collection, the **Violin Sonata in E major** by **Henrique Oswald** amply demonstrates.

Oswald's parentage was not Hispanic but Swiss-German. The family name, Ochswald, was changed at the time of Henrique's birth in Rio de Janeiro in 1852. Two years later, the family moved to São Paulo. His musically-gifted mother taught the piano, to which Henrique was instinctively attracted – so much so, that by the age of 12 he had given his first public recital. It was in São Paulo that he also studied with Gabriel Guiraudon and his progress was so marked that at the age of 16, in 1868, he left Brazil to study in Europe, where he eventually settled in Florence.

This was of course a lifetime before Heitor Villa-Lobos or Alberto Ginastera were to follow Oswald to Europe, where the younger man found and embraced the established forms of sonata and fugue – benchmark aims

of serious student composers. Oswald absorbed such forms naturally, and continued his piano studies with the legendary Giuseppe Buonamici and (one-time prodigy) Henri Ketten, and composition with Reginaldo Grazzini and Giovacchino Maglioni.

The assimilation of European music and the culture of his forebears proved too strong to resist for Oswald. He was assisted by royal patronage: Brazil's Emperor Pedro II attended a recital by the 19-year-old Henrique in 1871 and immediately granted him a generous allowance that lasted for almost 20 years, during which time Oswald's career and reputation in Europe were fully established. He went on to teach at the Florence Music Academy, and married a noted singer, Laudamia Gasperini, who was admired by both Liszt and Brahms.

Oswald may have been educated through traditional European precepts but he was by no means unaware of the emerging Impressionist school – his refined compositional style absorbed naturally elements which saw him win a spectacular first prize in a composition competition in Paris in 1902 – from an international entry of over 600 – the jury made up of Saint-Saëns, Fauré and Louis Diémer.

Yet the pull of his parentage and homeland proved too strong to resist forever. His decision was cemented by an invitation from the newly-elected President of Brazil, Rodrigues Alves, who in 1903 invited Oswald to become Director of the National Institute of Music, the present School of Music of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Leaving his wife and children in Europe, Oswald found the administrative demands ran counter to day-to-day contact with music. He resumed teaching at the Institute, numbering Luciano Gallet, Fructuoso Vianna and Lorenzo Fernandez among his pupils, and divided his time between Brazil and Europe until 1911, in which year he finally settled with his family in Rio de Janeiro. Here, from the age of 60, Oswald was to become one of the most influential figures in Brazilian musical life in the first half of the 20th century. His compositional legacy has been revived over the last 50 years, largely through the efforts of José Eduardo Martins and Eduardo Monteiro.

Oswald's music comprises several strands – there are three operas, a Requiem, five important orchestral works and many short piano pieces – but it is in his extensive chamber music output that his qualities are more readily appreciated today, of which the single Violin Sonata is one of his finest and most characteristic compositions.

The Sonata was completed in February 1908 in Rio and falls into four movements, of which the first, *Allegro moderato*, is the longest and most significant, laying out the material from the which the entire work derives. Newcomers to this music may detect late-Brahmsian influences in terms of the material's flowing lyricism from both players, and note the quasi-quintuplet figure in what might be termed the 'traditional' first subject exposition. It is the cut of this five-note figure which gives the work its inherent character – as the music progresses, we follow the wonderful outpouring of ideas which Oswald draws from his inspiration: full of life

and vitality, a genuine give-and-take from each instrument. The movement ends with, clearly, much more to convey.

The Sonata's two middle movements, a brief *Allegretto*-like Intermezzo (another Brahmsian influence?) and a longer, slower, movement prepare us for the splendid finale. Full of fire and energy yet never over-reaching itself, this quite masterly work of full organic expression ends with a burst of optimism and strength that leave us in no doubt as to the genuine artistry of this composer.

In taking up the post of Director of Brazil's National Institute of Music in 1903, Oswald succeeded **Leopoldo Américo Miguez** (1850-1902), who was born in Rio de Janeiro and was to achieve fame as composer of the Brazilian National Anthem.

It is fascinating that both composers' early lives ran along broadly similar lines. Miguez was taken to Europe at a very early age, where he grew up in Portugal and studied at the Paris Conservatoire before returning to Brazil around the age of 20 to enter a commercial business at the behest of his father. But the pull of music could not be gainsaid for Miguez; he had fully mastered the violin and had already composed a number of brilliant, effective pieces for the instrument.

Now freely pursuing a musical career, it is claimed that Miguez's music reveals a more sophisticated and contrapuntal style than that of any previous Brazilian art music, for his work marked an important change in the new Republic's creative aestheticism – sometimes termed 'tropical Romanticism'.

Miguez's **Violin Sonata in A major** dates from 1885, and falls into the traditional four movements. The opening movement begins with a swift, wonderfully lyrical idea that sweeps all before it – inspiration such as Brahms would surely have admired. The flow of this music and the lyricism it imbibes are compelling: here is a genuine composer, one feels.

The beautiful nocturnal *Andante espressivo* which follows is related thematically to the first movement's initial wide-ranging idea, and the Scherzo third movement structurally balances the slow movement in brevity and lighter character whilst maintaining the confidence of the Sonata overall, echoing the wide-ranging melodiousness that informs the work. The Sonata's individual characteristics are further explored in the refreshing final *Vivace*.

At the time of Oswald's death, the youngest generation of Brazilian composers could now study in their homeland to a high standard – if some, particularly Heitor Villa-Lobos, born in 1887, sought indigenous musical inspiration over traditional education. Villa-Lobos's strong creative character showed the way for others to follow whilst acknowledging European tradition.

Amongst the most important of Villa-Lobos's successors was **Francisco Mignone**, born in São Paulo in 1897. His father, a professional flautist, fully encouraged his son's absorption of the prevailing standards, and the impact on Mignone can be demonstrated when no less a figure than Richard Strauss conducted one of his works with the Vienna Philharmonic – Arturo Toscanini also programmed several of Mignone's symphonic works. Curiously however,

Mignone's fame in Brazil began in light music under the name of Chico Bororó, when several of 'Chico's' popular songs became very famous in the 1930s.

In our recital, we hear a work from the earliest part of Mignone's career. This is the haunting **Romanza** from 1917, marked *Andante non troppo*, the first of many short characteristic pieces he was to write for violin and piano, for which combination he was, much later, to add three important Sonatas in the 1960s.

The melodious **Poema** for violin and piano by the contemporary composer **Marlos Nobre**, born in Recife in north-western Brazil in 1939, is by far the most recent work on this disc. The piece dates from 2002 and was dedicated to the famous Brazilian violinist Mariuccia Iacovino – who was still performing at the age of 90! It is based on the second movement of Nobre's Op.74 *Concertante do Imaginário* (1989) for piano and strings. Such was the instantaneous success of the new version that Nobre made many other versions of *Poema* for different instrumental combinations.

Our programme is completed by a short work by another 19th-century Brazilian nationalist composer, **Alexandre Levy** (1864-92). Although his life was tragically short, he is still remembered primarily for pioneering the fusion of classical precepts with elements of Brazilian folk music. Levy's **Tango Brasileiro**, originally for solo piano, appeared in 1890, and this arrangement for violin and piano was made in 1964 by the Brazilian pianist, conductor and composer João de Souza Lima.

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**ANTHONY FLINT** began violin in England under the guidance of Robert Coleman of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, continuing studies in Canada under David Mankovitz. At 16, he was finalist in Montreal's Jeunesses Musicales Competition, performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto, and at 18 he was invited by Ruggiero Ricci to enrol at Indiana University, where he consequently won the Wilfred Baine Memorial Scholarship. He studied with Ruggiero Ricci, Franco Gulli and Joseph Gingold, completing his Degrees in Music and Literature with highest distinction.



Throughout his career, Anthony Flint has been invited as guest leader to the English National Opera, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, the West Deutsche Rundfunk, Cologne, the BBC Northern, Glasgow, the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon, the National Orchestra of Ecuador and the Orquestra Sinfônica of São Paulo. Following an early appointment as permanent leader of the CJRT Radio Orchestra, Toronto, he subsequently won the same position in Switzerland with the Orchestra della Radiotelevisione della Svizzera Italiana, a position he held for the following 23 years. From 2010 to 2019, Anthony Flint was invited as Leader of the Orquestra Filharmônica de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

As recitalist, soloist and chamber musician, this versatile performer has worked with many world-class artists such as Wolfgang Boettcher, Wen Sinn Yang, Bruno

Pasquier and Jean-Bernard Pommier. He has produced numerous CDs as well as performing on radio and television and has toured extensively in Japan, Europe and the Americas. Notably, Anthony Flint is violinist of acclaimed Trio Nobile. As pedagogue, he has held masterclasses and taught for institutions in Brazil, Ecuador, Canada, the USA, Portugal, Germany, France and Italy.

In recognition of his services to culture, Anthony Flint was made Musician of the Year by Ontario's Minister of Culture in 1988 and Awarded the Carlos Gomes Medal in Brazil in 2015.



**CLÉLIA IRUZUN's** endearing artistic personality, which combines her native Brazilian spirit with her exceptional musical gifts, has enabled this much-admired London-based pianist to build an enviable reputation for her performances of a wide range of music, from the great classical repertoire to works by significant figures from across the Americas.

Clélia has performed over 30 concertos for piano and orchestra, including the great classical and romantic concertos and also important Spanish and Latin American works.

Clélia Iruzun initially studied at the School of Music in Rio de Janeiro before becoming an advanced student at London's Royal Academy of Music, where she won a number of major prizes. She has subsequently worked with Nelson Freire,

Jacques Klein, Stephen Kovacevich and Fou Ts'ong, among other international artists, and many important Brazilian composers have written works for her including Francisco Mignone and Marlos Nobre.

Clélia's busy life embraces frequent appearances across Europe, the Americas and Asia. She has performed on television and radio in many countries, including frequent broadcasts for BBC Radio 3.



Clélia has made a number of highly successful CDs ranging from Latin American composers to concertos by Mendelssohn and the British composer Elizabeth Maconchy. Recent releases include the Piano Concertos of Mignone and Isaac Albéniz with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Jac van Steen, and the Piano Quintets by Amy Beach and Henrique Oswald with the Coull Quartet, released by SOMM Recordings, which received great acclaim. Her latest CD for SOMM – concertos by Henrique Oswald and Saint-Saëns (No.5, *Egyptian*) with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Jac van Steen – received excellent reviews such as: "Brazilian pianist Clélia Iruzun in a stunning performance" (*Musical Notes* Best of 2020) and "impressively executed... another rewarding disc from this team and this label" (*Gramophone*).

[www.cleliairuzun.com](http://www.cleliairuzun.com)

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