

NOTES ON THE LIFE
AND WORKS OF FATHER
JOSÉ MAURÍCIO NUNES GARCIA
Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre

The great artist that we will address was unique in the art of Gui d'Arezzo; he was a special organization, which exceeded his lifetime, and dominated for many years the field that he broke with the power of his wit, with his fertility, and the revolution caused by the souls he had won.

Before his appearance, there was in this city another musician no less remarkable for his ascetic spirit, and for the sacred compositions he wrote, which are still sung, and make the admiration of all artists and amateurs who enjoy the music of the sanctuary; but this musician, Father Manuel da Silva Rosa, composer of the celebrated music for the Passion of Jesus Christ, which is still sung in the imperial chapel and in the convent of St. Francis, in nothing influenced José Mauricio's education. Akin of the bishop Friar Antonio do Desterro, he always lived withdrawn, and to my knowledge, made no one co-participant in his admirable talent.¹

José Mauricio was born in this illustrious city of Rio de Janeiro on September 22, 1767, legitimate son of Apolinário Nunes Garcia and Victoria Maria da Cruz. We know, from the *da genere* habilitation sentence, passed in his favor on June 27, 1791 by Father Manuel dos Santos e Souza, secretary of the episcopal chamber, and signed by Dr. Francisco Gomes Villas-Boas, dean of the cathedral, general vicar and provider of the bishopric, that José Mauricio had been baptized in the old cathedral, today Rosary; and that his father was a native of the Governor's Island, on the parish of Our Lady of the Perpetual Help, and his mother was baptized in the chapel of São Gonçalo do Monte, a branch of the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in the parish of Cachoeira, the bishopric of Mariana; by the father's side he descended from a family established in Irajá, and by the mother's side, of a Creole of Guinea.

At the age of six years had he the misfortune of losing his father, but he found in the virtues and in the work of his mother and an aunt who loved him extremely, all the resources, support and directions for his early education.

Since the earliest childhood he expressed a whole vocation for music. He had a beautiful voice, sang admirably, improvised melodies, and played the viola and harpsichord without ever learned to. Often he amazed the professional musicians, not only with his improvisations and reflections, but also by the prodigious memory he had in faithfully reproducing all that he heard.

Sent to the school of José Salvador, there he learned with such quick intelligence, that in a few months he exceeded all of his colleagues, and was considered by that musician the first and the best of his disciples, and the only one of them by himself able to continue the study of an art which requires, in addition to natural gifts, an uninterrupted practice.

In that soul of artist, in that force of nature, there was not only a predisposition to highly understand the beautiful secrets of harmony and melody, there was more than that: there was a powerful duality that marks all superior man.

He sat, by his *motu proprio*, on the desks of the lessons of Father Elias, regal master of Latin, and there he acquired with equal ease that golden key that opens the treasures of classical antiquity, philosophy, history, profane eloquence, and the sacred with which he later adorned himself. His progresses in Latin were so extraordinary in those days, that at the end of three years his own master declared him in conditions to be his substitute. Equal triumph he obtained in the class of Dr. Goulão who taught rational and moral

¹ He was native of Rio de Janeiro, and died on May 15, 1793.

philosophy, and by whom was proposed to substitute him in the royal class, to which José Mauricio declined, not to cut his artistic studies, and the culture of an art that has already liberated him of the hardships of life, and that helped him to live more abundantly with his mother and aunt. Despite this refusal, José Mauricio taught it later, having among his disciples the canon Luiz Gonçalves dos Santos, author of well-known memories, and some writings in favor of the unity of the dogma and the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, in the years 28-30.

In those ages, individual security, the mainstay of poor families, and maternal love, had only a safe and inviolable haven in the church, and so, due to the religious spirit of the time, the families needed that one child at least supported them against the dark violence of the Holy Office, the revenge and fanaticism of their terrible relatives, the arrogance of the greatest of the landlords, and the cruelties of recruitment. The priest was the salvation anchor at home, the favorite man, the dearest son, the bond of harmony, the one who brought nobility to the family, and made it privileged and co-participant in all public pleasures, which were limited to the feasts of the church and to those home celebrations in accordance with the cult. At those times of fanaticism and monastic power, the religious garments had the prestige and the privilege of being respected since the viceroy room to the poorest housing: the cassock replaced the age, birth, wealth and knowledge.

The ecclesiastical robes so well evidenced the qualities of spirit and of the heart of José Mauricio, that he was authorized to worthily go within the homes of the best families, whose parents trusted him his daughters, who spent whole hours in teaching and exercises of music.

In this life of study and teaching, he acquired the prodigious skills of execution that he kept forever; and also the friendship of all who called him, including the wealthy

dealer Thomaz Gonçalves, who, with the gift of an estate made him able to receive the deacon's orders, and sing the solemn Mass in the year 1792; and get licensed to preach in 1798, even before having studied rhetoric with Dr. Manuel Ignacio da Silva Alvarenga, what happened from 1802 to 1804, as clearly expressed by that master, when about him he says and certifies "that he attended his classes for the space of two years, and there he made rapid progresses, which rarely are".

The very illustrious and virtuous bishop of Rio de Janeiro, José Caetano da Silva Coutinho, I often heard praising Father Jose Mauricio, not as an artist but as an illustrious priest of his diocese, and whose talents overflow out of the music. He was among the invited for those literary lectures that the great bishop did in his palace, which were effective members priest Caldas, the Marquis of Maricá and other selected, which ceased at the time of independence, for having been ill deliberately spied his palace by a government order.²

Let us hear about the literary merit of José Mauricio our Januario da Cunha Barbosa, a competent judge, and his friend; let's hear what he said in *Diário Fluminense* on May 7, 1830: "José Mauricio joined to all those studies (the necessary for the priesthood), vast and deep knowledge of geography and history both secular and sacred, and French and Italian languages, not being fluent in English and Greek, which he also studied, but not so hard".

In the eve of his thirty years of age, with the death of Rev. João Lopes Ferreira, chapel master of the old Cathedral, he was appointed to his place, as seen from the instrument drawn up by the recipient João Gonçalves da Silva Campos on June 2, 1798, with the salary of six hundred thousand réis annually. Organist and composer, he increased the cathedral choir with a large number of chosen disciples, and the brightness of the cult with new and varied compositions.

² As I am debtor of great favors to this venerable prelate, who hosted me in his palace with fatherly kindness, I do not desire ever to suppose something in this regard, for was he a son of Portugal, and this happens in the times of the independence. General Nóbrega asked Mr. José Caetano a free license so that his family could go to the convent of Our Lady of the Perpetual Help, to spend some days with a nun her relative. The abbess of those times asked Mr. Bishop the favor of denying such licenses because they disturbed the order of the house. Mr. D. José, refusing to say the reason why he denied this license not to compromise the abbess, caused wrath in the general, who in revenge said to José Bonifácio he knew on good

authority, that the bishop was against the independence. Immediately his palace was spied, and Mr. Bishop, aware of it, ordered the doors to be closed at eight o'clock in the evening, order that he kept strictly until his death in 1833.

Complaining to me that this was an injustice towards that holy prelate, the late councilor José Joaquim da Rocha told me the origin of the fact in Nobrega's own words; which he added, that he had done it to tease and to deprive him of his visits at night. Mr. Jose Bonifacio and Mr. José died in enmity, and perhaps without knowledge about the origin of such a complaint.

With the free public education, and also with the private one, from which he took most of his subsistence, with his works, he spread the taste of music in the future capital, and made its roots in such a way that the city of Rio de Janeiro can now be called the city of the pianos.

In the ten years that he served in this new job, the great artist started out to rise highly and to widen the horizon of his creations; but he was still so poor that he could not have a harpsichord, as he taught the precepts and the practice of harmony with a steel guitar in his school at Marrecas street.

II

In the year 1808, the arrival of the royal family, he was in the height of his life and talent. The Prince Regent, great connoisseur of music and all of the cult practices admired him so much, that without the slightest reluctance appointed him by the decree of November 26 of that year, music inspector of the royal chapel, with the same salary of six hundred thousand reis! And in this decree is mentioned the music class and free education taught by José Mauricio!!!

These classes produced most of the singers and instrumentalists who made the orchestra of the Royal Chapel, and some composers, among them the most distinguished were Francisco Manuel da Silva, Francisco da Luz and Candido Inacio da Silva; among the musicians, who still live, Father Manuel Alves, Francisco da Motta, and a few retired. After 1813, when the famous Marcos Portugal came from Lisbon, and with him a good number of voices and instruments, ecclesiastical functions have risen to the point of the patriarchal of Lisbon, which copied faithfully St. Peter in Rome, in what was possible in a temple where there did not pontificate the pope surrounded by the sacred college.

In these so repeated and prolonged feasts, in continuous vigils, ordered by the royal requirement, in these times of intense intellectual work, creative hours, but fatal to life, that robust constitution was gradually ruining.

Compelled to compose, rehearse and conduct, in 1816 he already suffered, as he himself says in a requirement to the bishop, to be allowed to say the Mass at home.

To evaluate the power and the strength of the talent of José Mauricio, it is enough to say that the King called him the new Marcos, before this famous composer had arrived in Brazil; and that despite his mixed color, he was tolerated in the court, this court where the birth certificate formed the most deserving man, conceded the right to all sympathies,

and where being Brazilian, and especially mulatto, was enough to remove many favors, and even many rights.

The Lord King João VI was the one whose heart never distinguished in man incidents or accidents: Father and Prince, he was born above all prejudices of envy, or morals of a nation in decay, where selfishness and inability took shelter in the privilege of by chance being born in Portugal.

Out of the atmosphere of the presence of the king, José Mauricio suffered often from the Portuguese musicians invectives well worthy of arrogant stupidity; but his soul never bended to a reprisal.

In one of these great celebrations, was the king so carried away with enthusiasm, that, finished the feast, he called to the palace Father Jose Mauricio, and before his full court, took from the uniform of the Viscount of Vila Nova da Rainha the medal of the Habit of Christ, and pinned it with his own hand on the chest of his musician, telling him at the same time the most flattering things. This memorable fact for the artist's glory, and for his king, happened in the year 1810, just before February; because he professed on 17 March, having by godfathers Francisco José Rufino de Souza, the same Viscount of Vila Nova da Rainha, then Baron, and Fr. José Marcelino Gonçalves, his disciple and son of his former protector Tomás Gonçalves.

This act of the King was the salvation for José Mauricio.

Shortly thereafter, he conceded him a ration of valet, which was converted into a monthly fee of 32\$000 at the musician's request, due to the embarrassments he suffered in the warehouse of the palace employees.

The king, aware of the troubles of José Mauricio due to his sedentary life, ordered to be sent him a horse every day. The order was executed, since every afternoon a young man went to his house with a horse, but the animal was such that neither the master himself, nor the servant dared to ride it for a minute. It seems that the lowest equerry of those times thought as equal those talents of chapel master and equitation master.

The frigate that brought us the Archduchess, the first Empress of Brazil, carried also a worthy music band to follow her and smooth the long journey for that wistful princess. José Mauricio until then had not seen this mechanical precision, this equality of execution that is a privilege of the compatriots of Mozart and Beethoven; neither he knew the instruments that she brought. So enamored he was listening that musical band, that for it he improvised twelve *Divertimenti*, which

are twelve admirable and inspired pieces. During the rehearsal of these works, people gathered in the square of St. George, in front of José Mauricio's house, to hear them.

Sometime later, and by order of the king, he wrote to the Royal Theater of São João an opera entitled - *Le due Gemelle*, whose scores were lost, one in the fire of the same theater and the other, the original, between the papers of Marcos Portugal, which were sold by weight to firework merchants and tavern keepers; as a note written by the hand of José Mauricio made in an inventory of the music for the royal treasury in 1821, has the following:

“Le due Gemelle, drama in music by José Mauricio: with instrumental and singing parts: the score is found at Mr. Marcos Portugal.”

Some people say that this opera had never been staged but others report that it had been a couple of times, but the secret monitoring kept it away from the Theater, so that only Marcos Portugal would stay on the field. That this great composer was jealous we have more than a fact, and many were the traps he prepared to annihilate Neukomm, and the young Francisco Manuel da Silva, to whom the Prince Royal, D. Pedro I, had promised to send to Italy.³

With the return of the king [to Portugal], the feasts of the chapel have been modified, as can be seen in the episcopal provision of May 17, 1822, in which the bishop says, "is no longer possible to celebrate the divine offices with the same rigor and residence, and solemnity of singing, which it had in its primitive institution". The ministers of the church were gone, and with them some artists, however the key musicians stayed, because the Prince Regent was also a musician, and had already composed something, though not so intimately in love with the chant, ceremonies and other disciplines own to a highly luxurious cathedral.

III

The muse of José Mauricio did not appear at the time of the independence, because, as he said, the prince wanted to do everything.

If to the new face of the political events we join thirty-three years of assiduous work, and the deprivation of part of

his salary to the natural melancholy of a tired man, who had only existed for his art and to the service of his king, no wonder he felt greatly depressed.

In the last days of his life he lived just for art, because to it he consecrated all the hours he did not suffer cruelly. It's from that time the famous Mass of St. Cecilia, whose score is in the archives of the Historical Institute, and that cannot be executed today for the lack of voices.

Let's yet hear canon Januário: "José Mauricio began to suffer from diseases, greatly worsened by the work he spent in the performance of his obligations, losing often whole nights in long compositions that Mr. João VI wanted to be finalized the most readily; his life was gradually weakening, until in a stronger and almost sudden attack, had his term".

The king, accustomed to the miracles of the muse of our artist, no longer measured the time, only marked the end; and we can evaluate the hours of agony suffered by that celebrity, seeing the time run, and his reputation endangered if by chance inspiration failed, or if one of these artistic sleeps all the inspired men are subject steal the time needed and deliver him to the implacable injustice of his colleagues, ready to listen, in aim to annihilate him. And for him the dangers doubled, because he was alone, and had not even the privilege of birth, which would defend him with all favorable preventions. Everywhere was heard one muttering some disfavor after a bright indeed. These echoes of bias needed to be covered and cushioned with new harmonies, with large and severe compositions and hymns to sing the artist's own triumph.

Oh! It is very ungrateful the sort of man being choked, and looking for life; is by far the painful situation to the artist who has consciousness of himself, who knows his value, the glow of his fire, surrounded by darkness; he wins, but they are not extinguished. Had I not the king by my side, a thousand times I would explode in pain: what I have borne out of these people, he said, only God knows.

Some sovereigns are followed on their journey by their riders, by their dogs, and their horses; others by their actors and minstrels; many by his soldiers, and some by their clowns and parasites: Lord D. João VI was accompanied by his

³ Mr. Francisco Manuel da Silva, currently Director of the Music Conservatory, after having studied with José Mauricio, received lessons from Neukomm. Young still, he composed a Te Deum, which he offered it to the real prince, and H.H. was so pleased with the offer, that he promised to send the young composer to Italy. Mr. Francisco Manuel was part of the royal chamber

orchestra, and so was subject to Marcos Portugal, who was the master; and to divert him to the taste and the time of writing, the instrument he played was changed from violoncello to violin, and he was threatened to be fired if he did not study assiduously. For those who have the practice of the things of life, and art, the case is clear.

priests and his musicians. The spirit and the ecclesiastical practices were always with him. In a narrow corridor of São Cristóvão, many solemn feasts were celebrated, with new songs, and the preaching of a São Carlos, a Sampaio, and a Mont'Alverne. On the farm of Santa Cruz, where there was more space, magnificent compositions were presented, written right there, often improvised by the chapel masters. On one of these journeys, José Mauricio wrote his famous Mass of the beheading of John the Baptist, and other works that he forgot. This was the Mass that ended all the invectives of the musicians of the royal chamber, because this great instrumental work was all written within twenty days, having Marcos Portugal spent a month in composing the Matins, for organ and two voices.

To assess the readiness and fertility of this master, just list the works that he wrote up to the year 1811, which I drew from an outline of an inventory list of the existing music in the royal chapel, made by José Mauricio's own hands: rise above 200 the mentioned parts. I hope with time to earn from someone I recently headed, the permission to complete this catalog, as well as the one with the works of Marcos Portugal, much perfect to some extent, because I have the autograph.

There is an illness of the soul that puts a man in a world of torture, or keeps him a wreck when the origin is foolish vanity: this illness is envy. The jealous jump of joy to the heavens when they find a word to shoot down the alien substance, to make it at least doubtful on the consciousness of the inexperienced. They have no taste; it was the tip of the dagger with which they hurt José Mauricio; he has no taste, he never left here, he did not see anything, he had never been in Italy, he did not learn, he had no master, he did not attend conservatories! Such was the studied and unison litany of men who never knew what is the function of a pipe in an organ, and to whom nature had declined the gift of combining some notes to compose ten bars. Typhoon death threw them into the most perfect oblivion, and if someone of them is alive today, he's just known by himself.

After the withdrawal of the king and consummated the independence, was that Marcos Portugal met the beautiful and noble character of José Mauricio, and the admiration became so great that he died his great supporter and friend.

The political events changed the situation of the Brazilians, and retracted the demonstrations and overt acts of most men who hitherto thought they were the lords of the land,

and as such superior in all human faculties, although the queen's physician, Dr. Manuel Luiz, always repeated: in Portugal were born the muscles of the Portuguese nation, and in Brazil the nerves.

José Mauricio always lived in the intimacy of the great masters. It was amazing to listen to him analyzing a score as a rhetorical analyzes a sentence. Master of a prodigious memory, he possessed the widest musical scholarship possible; nothing escaped him, imitation, or theft, he indicated, both the work and the precise place. By that artistic appreciation, and the spirit of justice to his favorite masters of Germany and Italy, we saw him once grieve and complain about the versatility of his art companions, darkening the old masters to give Joaquim Rossini the scepter of musical art.

Driven by anger, he began to shred the Operas of the Swan of Pesaro, to strip these melodic creations, these harmonic beauty, and to show its origin, the pure source from which emanated more or less disguised; but he got to a point, and it was in the opera Mathilde, where he stopped, and smiling, he exclaimed: no, this is new, this is sublime; he is an immense man, a genius who will go far: he already wrote the aria of the slander, and two *concertante* pieces I admire! And Joaquim Rossini had not yet given to the world the Moses, had not yet gifted his century with William Tell, and the Stabat Mater.

His artistic integrity was higher than that irritation; his enthusiasm for Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven was most fair because this triad screened all the glory of German art, that severe school that planted in the harsh northern climates a scientific art, beautiful, and proprietress of endless perfection.

The celebrated Neukomm, disciple of Haydn, who came to this court as a professor of music with the artistic colony run by Lebreton to found the Academy of Fine Arts, who was also a victim of bias that inveighed José Mauricio, told me in Paris about the Brazilian master, he was the first improviser in the world. He lamented the fate of the artist in Brazil, praised his character, and regretted the agonies of the author of the famous Requiem Mass; and by the way he told me the following fact, that on my return to the homeland was confirmed by Fasciotti the singer, who also witnessed it.

"In one of those meetings that were made at home of the Marquis de Santo Amaro, we tested some songs that reached me of Europe. Every time it was to sing, I ceded the piano to the father-master, because I never saw anyone better than him in the accompaniment. Among various fantasies, Fasciotti

sang a *barcarola* which was frantically applauded and repeated. José Mauricio, who was on the piano, as if to rest, began to vary on the theme, and with our applause to grow and multiply in each beautiful novelty. Suspended, and interrupting our admiration with continuous ovations, there we stayed until the reveille would surprise us. Ah! Brazilians have never known the value of the man they had, the more precious because it was all fruit of his own resources! And how would they know? I, the favorite disciple of Haydn, which completed by his order the works he left incomplete, wrote in Rio de Janeiro a Mass, which was delivered to the censorship of a committee composed of that poor Mazziotti and the brother of Marcos Portugal, Mass which was never executed because it was not of them”

"Some time later, as I entered the royal chapel by chance, I heard on the organ harmonies that I was not strange; little by little, I recognized the pieces of my wretched Mass; I went up to the choir, and there I met José Mauricio, on sight of my score, to transpose it by improvise for his organ. I approached him, and for some time I felt silent admiring the loyalty and bravery of the interpretation of that great master; nothing essential escaped from him ... I could not resist, and hugged him when he finished, and we cried both without saying anything”.

Neukomm was the composer of that monstrous concert, of three thousand artists, performed at the inauguration of the statue of Guttenberg! Neukomm came to Brazil with João Baptista Debret, Nicholas Taunay and Gradjean de Montigny, qualified as counterpoint master. He never taught: just gave some private lessons to Francisco Manuel da Silva, and perhaps these lessons were the cause of this young man be pursued artistic and Machiavellian by Marcos Portugal as soon as he presented the first *Te Deum* of his own.

There was our artist improvised so much and without rest, that once entering the choir of the then already imperial chapel, he stopped at the door, and asked to one of his disciples, as if rapt, Whose is this beautiful music?!

It is yours, father-master, don't you remember?

Mine? Replies José Mauricio! - Yes, sir, yours. - It seems to me now; but when did I write it, do you remember?

- In the old king's time, turned his disciple.

José Mauricio fell silent, struck his head, wiped his tears and said between sobs:

“Ah! In those times when I sat at the table I had in my eyes the King, and in my ears and a huge and prodigious orchestra. For many nights I could not sleep, because this orchestra accompanied me, and its effects were such that I passed the night sleepless; and unfortunately I could never write down what I clearly heard. Today, I do only hear the chirping of crickets, my groans, or the yelp of dogs that bother me and sadden me”.

The muse, that beautiful and seductive daughter of heaven is like the body beauty, which turns into disgust in old age, especially when misery comes to the chase. The ingenious man, who lives in idealism, if he does not have a grateful homeland, is the image of the most terrible disappointment when the age extinguishes his fire from heaven, and breaks his strength: he is the admired beauty, the queen of pleasures transformed in the woman who expires at the hospital cot.

In 1830, Brazil still had his prince, but no more his perpetual defender, the star of Ypiranga; because slander and bad advices had precipitated him to the opposite of that great resolution, and those acts that belong today to the history field, and the admiration of men. Art and his ministers in these transitional times live the life of outcasts, especially in the countries where the prince is the driving force of the social machine.

On the morning of April 18, 1830, singing the hymn of Our Lady, expired José Mauricio, in his house no. 18 at the street of the Nuncio. Called by his son, Dr. Jose Mauricio Nunes Garcia, current professor of anatomy in the medical school of this court, and then my fellow student, I took a mask in plaster of his features, which accompanied me to Europe, and which is today in the National Museum along with the masks of Dante, Tasso, Jose Bonifácio, Antonio Carlos and Januário Arvellos.

When the canon Luiz Gonçalves came to dress the corpse, he found him ready, because this pious act was rendered by his son. Still reminds me, as I was present, to see him on his deathbed with the garments that he used at home, which were trousers and a purple silk jacket; I'm still seeing in his table, where there was the treatise of counterpoint and harmony that he had ended a few days before he died; and on a sheet of paper with a mobile circle in which were marked all the sound scales, and moved either way it was, it presented a complete system of harmony. This treatise and this ingenious invention disappeared from the table the same day.

The brotherhood of Saint Cecilia, which made him the

burial and funeral, wished to keep his bones, but his son fulfilled his father's will, by depositing them in the order of St. Peter. Today are they in the Holy Sacrament church, by a provision of Monsignor Narcissus.

José Mauricio was a man of a more than ordinary stature; he had a noble face, a sharp look, and bright when he conducted the orchestra or spoke of art; the dimensions and bony ridges of his whole, showed that he had been of a strong constitution. He had on the lips, on the nose form, and on the salient cheekbones the characters of the Mixed race.

Dr. Dannessy, phrenologist and a fanatical disciple of Gall, keeps a copy of the mask mentioned above in his office in Paris, but in his investigations he got badly wrong, which is a good evidence about the brain and its external protuberances, that in most occasions the core decides, not the shell. These mistakes of the very doctor are

repeated at other times in the Brazilian legation, after having groped a large number of Brazilian heads.

The art of the sanctuary, after the death of this great musician, goes on without a guide. Pedro Teixeira, a man of talent but poor in spirit, prostituted it to the point of turning an Italian opera into a sacred song, and the libretto into the hymns of the church. This bad taste has spread up to the point of indecency when a few months ago arias of the [Theatre] Provisório had been applauded in the church as if the prayers were in the audience. The Academy of Fine Arts, in the sight of such a desecration, raised their protest to the imperial government, and they hope it takes the salutary measures.

The times we live is a time of reconstruction; the voice of the artist has already echo in social luminaries; and the art, an unveiled and spontaneous guard on the philosopher prince who presides and protects the sessions and the work of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute.