



NAXOS
THE MUSIC OF
BRAZIL



Henrique
OSWALD
Symphony, Op. 43
Sinfonietta, Op. 27 • Elegia

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, by the Instituto Musica Brasilis and by musicologists working together with the orchestras.



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About The Scores

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Henrique Oswald (1852–1931)

Orchestral Works

Reserved and thoughtful, bright-eyed and short of stature, Brazilian composer Henrique Oswald belatedly achieved a position of authority in the music scene of his native country, having travelled to Italy at 16, not to settle in Brazil again until he was 51.

The son of a Swiss father, Jean-Jacques Oschwald, who simplified his name to Oswald, and an Italian mother, Maria Carlota Cantagalli, Oswald was born in Rio de Janeiro on 14 April 1852, two years after his parents had arrived in Brazil. A year later, Jean-Jacques' business ventures took the family to São Paulo, where he both opened the first brewery and became a piano dealer. As a child, Henrique studied the piano first with his mother, and then with Gabriel Giraudon, until his parents decided to move to Italy, taking advantage of their connections in that country. Carlota was fluent in French, English and German as well as her native Italian – as a family, the Oswalds conversed in Italian, but even as a child Henrique used French when writing to his father, who was often away on business.

This multiculturalism was also part of his adult life: in 1881, Henrique married singer Laudômia Gasperini, daughter of an Italian father and a French mother, and their house in Florence became a beacon for artists and intellectuals. Later, having returned to Brazil, they welcomed many travelling musicians as well as local composers and players to their home, hosting artistic discussions and informal performances of new works.

Given that Oswald was a polyglot who had benefited from a solid musical education since childhood, it is not surprising that his musical language should reveal his awareness of Italian, French and German stylistic and aesthetic trends. In Italy, he had studied composition with Giovacchino Maglioni and Reginaldo Grazzini, and piano with the Hungarian-born Henry Ketten and with Giuseppe Buonamici who, as a student of Hans von Bülow and friend of Johannes Brahms, had strong Germanic connections. Oswald's own close links with French culture led him to give several of his works French titles, the best-known of them being *Il neige!*, with which he won *Le Figaro's* composition competition in 1902.

Having established a career in Italy as pianist and composer, as well as teaching at Florence's Istituto Musicale, he went back to Brazil and took up an appointment as director of the Instituto Nacional de Música in 1903, remaining in that post until 1906. In 1911 he became professor of piano at the Instituto, and as such helped launch the careers of numerous other pianists as well as teaching piano to many of Brazil's young composers. His name frequently appeared in Brazilian newspapers and journals, whether in connection with his own concerts as pianist or composer, or with awards won by his students.

Perhaps the most European of Brazilian composers, Oswald had both great command of form and great skill in orchestration. An excellent pianist, he premiered many of his piano works himself. Embracing all genres, his catalogue includes songs, solo piano pieces and chamber works, in addition to choral and orchestral music.

It is no easy task to determine the chronology of Henrique Oswald's compositions. Many of his manuscripts are undated, and there are discrepancies in his opus numbering system, although recent musicological research is shedding more light on this. Works dating from his European phase were composed during the decade in which he began to reconnect with Brazil, arranging concerts in both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in order to introduce audiences there to his music. These concerts, however, made little impact: press reviews suggest that they were not well attended, probably because Brazilians knew little about him at this point. The *Elegia* and *Sinfonietta, Op. 27* were both written while he was still in Florence, while the *Symphony, Op. 43* was composed in Brazil.

Originally conceived for cello and piano, as a form of encouragement for his son Carlos, who had just started learning the former instrument, the *Elegia* is dedicated to the memory of Oswald's friend Enrico Mariotti. The cello-piano manuscript is undated, but the orchestral version of 1896 was premiered in Rio de Janeiro in 1915 by the Orquestra de Concertos Sinfônicos, conducted by Francisco Braga. The cellos introduce the two-phrase main theme before it is repeated by the oboe. Although striking, the theme is somewhat undefined, suggesting subsequent development. The opening idea is then transformed by successive leaps and small ascending melodic movements – this creates an increasingly expressive effect, leading to an impressive orchestral *tutti* which concludes with an unexpected harmonic suspension. After this *fortissimo* moment, the initial melody is reintroduced by the oboe, clarinet and violins, like an evocation, before the work ends *pianissimo*.

In contrast to the *Elegia*, the *Sinfonietta, Op. 27* started out as an orchestral work, in 1897. The chamber version followed two years later, when Oswald transformed the original score into a string octet, the only work of its kind of which there is any record in the Brazilian Romantic chamber repertoire.

The *Sinfonietta* has a conventional four-movement structure. Its fast sonata-form opening movement is followed by a theme-and-variations *Andante con moto*, a *Tempo di minuetto* and a *Presto* finale. The theme-and-variations second movement reveals Oswald's ability to work with the principle of unity in variety, present throughout his work. The simple triple-time theme is introduced by the horns, accompanied by pizzicato strings with occasional interventions from the winds. The writing becomes *vivace* in the first variation, which explores staccato writing for the winds with rapid melodies passed from one instrument to another, while the harmonic structure remains the same. The second variation gives the leading role to flutes and viola, who initiate changes in rhythm and introduce the brass with a dotted-note motif. The rhythmic diversification increases. The third variation brings a change in tempo – marked *più animato*, it sets the strings centre stage. The fourth and final variation begins with a striking contrast, moving into the minor mode and creating a new texture, with blocs of sound that explore lower registers and make an explicit return to the rhythmic pattern of the theme. Little by little, melodic elements from Variation I appear and the pizzicato also returns. A final cadence brings us back to the major chord of the opening. The *Sinfonietta* continues with an elegant *Minuetto* third movement before the dazzling *Presto* brings it to an end in an atmosphere of radiance.

Written in 1910, with manuscripts for other versions dated between 1910 and 1912, Oswald's *Symphony, Op. 43* was created at a key moment in the history of Brazilian orchestral music. In the early decades of the 20th century, composer-conductors such as Alberto Nepomuceno, Francisco Braga and, a little later, Walter Burle Marx, one of Oswald's piano students, were exciting audiences with their new works. The *Symphony* was given its premiere in Rio de Janeiro in 1918 by the orchestra of Buenos Aires's Teatro Colón, conducted by Gino Marinuzzi. Regarded as Oswald's finest orchestral achievement, it was praised by musicologist Mário de Andrade, a key protagonist of Brazilian modernism, for its compact writing, perfect balance and melodic flexibility, especially in the *Scherzo*. The work was conducted during the composer's lifetime by such eminent figures as fellow composers Heitor Villa-Lobos (1926) and Francisco Braga (1930), as well as Felix Weingartner, who performed the *Adagio* and *Allegro vivace* with the Vienna Philharmonic during the orchestra's tour of Brazil in 1922.

Dedicated to Oswald's wife, the *Symphony* is cast in four movements: *Allegro moderato*, *Adagio*, *Scherzo: Allegro vivace* and *Allegro deciso*.

The first movement begins with a calm, undulating theme in 3/4 time on strings and winds, but contrasting musical gestures and a second, staccato theme in the brass soon make an appearance. At times, this second theme seems to interrupt or destabilise the first; at other moments there is more of an equal balance between the two impulses – one more lyrical, the other more rhythmic, almost martial in nature. In the end, a great, almost dizzying chromatic descent from high to low, from *fortissimo* to *pianissimo*, introduces the final return of the lyricism of the first theme as a memory of the second resonates in the timpani, for an open, mysterious conclusion.

The *Adagio*, in quadruple time, retains elements heard in the *Allegro moderato*, including chromatic writing and the role played by the brass. It also opens in the same air of mystery with which its predecessor closed. Here, however, everything develops slowly, as if the music were trying out different paths. The results are gradually revealed, with beautiful timbral combinations explored along the way, and another reminder of the first movement at the end.

The *Allegro vivace Scherzo*, in 6/8, is all light and movement. The themes are clear, there is powerful rhythmic writing for the strings, dance-like patterns and various sound effects, such as the imitation of bird song in the flutes, which enhances the general feeling of liveliness. The *Allegro deciso* begins with trumpet fanfares – these herald an affirmative, triumphant movement of synthesis which, in the final bars, presents a recapitulation of the main theme of the first movement.

In the *Symphony*, Oswald's sound combinations travel from darkness to light, using diatonic tonality and chromaticism, with whole-tone scales making occasional appearances. The full power of the orchestra is employed for moments of grandeur, while there are also solos of the utmost delicacy in the strings and woodwinds. The result is a composition of solid construction and undeniable beauty – and one of the most significant works of its genre in the Brazilian orchestral literature as a whole.

Susana Cecilia Igayara-Souza
English translation: Susannah Howe

Henrique Oswald (1852–1931)

Obras sinfônicas

Discreto e atencioso, este brasileiro de estatura pequena e olhos vívidos conquistou tardiamente uma posição de autoridade musical em seu país de origem, ao qual voltaria apenas aos 51 anos de idade, depois de viver desde os 16 anos na Itália.

Filho do suíço Jean-Jacques Oswald, que simplificou o nome para Oswald, e da italiana Maria Carlota Cantagalli, Henrique Oswald nasceu no Rio de Janeiro em 14 de abril de 1852, apenas dois anos depois do casal fixar residência no Brasil. Um ano após seu nascimento, a família mudou-se para São Paulo, em função dos empreendimentos comerciais de Jean-Jacques, que abriu a primeira cervejaria da cidade e foi comerciante de pianos. Em São Paulo, o jovem Henrique estudou piano com o francês Gabriel Giraudon, até a família decidir-se pela mudança para a Itália, aproveitando os laços familiares da mãe Carlota. Além de ser sua primeira professora de piano, Carlota dominava o francês, inglês e alemão, além do italiano natal. O idioma familiar era o italiano, mas ainda criança Henrique escrevia cartas em francês ao pai, em constantes viagens de negócios.

O ambiente multicultural foi uma constante na vida de Henrique mesmo depois de casar-se, em 1881, com a cantora Laudômia Gasperini, filha de pai italiano e mãe francesa. Em Florença, a casa dos Oswald era ponto de encontro de artistas e intelectuais. Depois da mudança para o Brasil, o casal recebia em sua residência músicos em passagem pela cidade e muitos compositores e intérpretes brasileiros, que se reuniam para discussões artísticas e apresentações informais de novas composições.

Poliglota com sólida formação musical desde a infância, não surpreende que sua linguagem musical também revele contatos com aspectos estilísticos e estéticos vindos da Itália, França e Alemanha. Na Itália, estudou composição com Giovacchino Maglioni e Reginaldo Grazzini. No piano, foi aluno do húngaro Henry Ketten e do italiano Giuseppe Buonamici, por sua vez ligado à cultura alemã, aluno de Hans von Büllow e amigo de Johannes Brahms. A ligação de Henrique Oswald com a cultura francesa também foi forte e diversas obras receberam títulos em francês, das quais a mais conhecida foi, sem dúvida, *Il Neige!*, vencedora do concurso do Jornal *Le Figaro* em 1902.

Com carreira como pianista e compositor, além de professor no Instituto Musical de Florença, voltou ao Brasil para assumir a direção do Instituto Nacional de Música, cargo que ocupou entre 1903 e 1906. Catedrático de piano a partir de 1911, foi responsável por inúmeras carreiras pianísticas, ensinou o instrumento para muitos compositores brasileiros e foi citado na imprensa de maneira constante, tanto por seus concertos como pianista e compositor, como pelos prêmios conquistados por seus alunos e alunas.

Talvez o mais europeu dos compositores brasileiros, Oswald foi um cultor da forma, hábil orquestrador e ótimo pianista, tendo estreado muitas de suas obras com piano. Dedicou-se a todos os gêneros musicais, tendo deixado obras para piano solo, música de câmara, música sinfônica, ópera, canção e canto coral.

A cronologia das composições de Henrique Oswald não é fácil de ser estabelecida: muitos manuscritos não são datados e há divergências nos números de *opus*, o que vem sendo esclarecido por pesquisas musicológicas recentes. As obras da fase europeia são da década em que Henrique Oswald começou a se reaproximar do Brasil, realizando concertos no Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo para que os brasileiros conhecessem sua obra, mas com pouco resultado: a crítica jornalística indica que esses concertos não tiveram grande público, o que indica um ambiente musical pouco familiarizado com o compositor que saiu do Brasil muito jovem para terminar os estudos e profissionalizar-se na Itália. A *Elegia* e a *Sinfonietta, op.27* são obras dessa fase, compostas na Itália; a *Sinfonia, op.43*, por sua vez, já foi composta no Brasil.

A *Elegia* foi originalmente escrita para violoncelo e piano como incentivo ao seu filho Carlos, que começava a estudar o instrumento, e dedicada à memória do amigo Enrico Mariotti. O manuscrito para violoncelo e piano não está datado, mas a versão orquestral, de 1896, foi estreada no Rio de Janeiro em 1915, pela Orquestra de Concertos Sinfônicos, regida por Francisco Braga. Os violoncelos apresentam o tema em duas frases, repetido pelo oboé. Apesar de marcante, o tema traz alguma indefinição, sugerindo um posterior desenvolvimento. A ideia inicial é transformada pelos saltos seguidos e pequenos movimentos melódicos ascendentes, criando um efeito cada vez mais expressivo para resultar em um *tutti* orquestral de grande impacto, surpreendendo pela harmonização suspensiva ao final. Depois desse momento em fortíssimo, a melodia inicial é rerepresentada pelo oboé e pela clarineta e violinos, como uma evocação, rumo ao final em pianíssimo.

A *Sinfonietta op.27* foi originalmente escrita para orquestra em 1897 e, ao contrário da *Elegia*, ganhou uma versão de câmara posterior, tendo sido reelaborada como octeto de cordas em 1899 – a única peça para essa formação de que se tem registro na literatura camerística romântica brasileira. A obra tem quatro movimentos, em estrutura clássica. Depois de um primeiro movimento rápido, em forma sonata, segue-se um *Andante com moto* (Tema e variações), um *Tempo di Minueto* e o *Presto* final. O Tema e variações é um bom exemplo de como Oswald trabalhava a unidade na variedade, princípio composicional presente em toda sua obra. O tema simples em compasso ternário é apresentado pelas trompas, com acompanhamento das cordas em *pizzicato* e pequenas intervenções de instrumentos de sopro. A primeira variação acrescenta movimento e explora o *staccato* nas madeiras com melodias rápidas que passam de um instrumento a outro, mantendo a estrutura harmônica. A segunda variação traz o protagonismo para as flautas e para a viola, alterando ritmicamente a apresentando os trompetes com um motivo em notas pontuadas. A diversificação rítmica aumenta. Na terceira, há alteração de andamento para um *più animato* e protagonismo das cordas. A última variação inicia com grande contraste, com a harmonia alterada para o modo menor e nova textura, com blocos sonoros explorando regiões mais graves e retomando explicitamente o padrão rítmico do tema. Aos poucos, introduz elementos melódicos da primeira variação e o retorno do *pizzicato*. Uma cadência final traz de volta o acorde maior inicial. A obra segue com um elegante *Minueto* e um brilhante *Presto*, que termina a obra numa atmosfera luminosa.

A *Sinfonia opus 43*, composta em 1910, com manuscritos de outras versões datados entre 1910 e 1912, nasceu em um importante momento em prol da música sinfônica no Brasil, liderado por compositores-regentes que movimentavam o público e a crítica nas primeiras décadas do século XX, como Alberto Nepomuceno e Francisco Braga, mais tarde ampliado por Walter Burle Marx, um dos alunos de piano de Henrique Oswald. A obra foi estreada no Rio de Janeiro em 1918, pela orquestra do Teatro Colón de Buenos Aires, com regência de Gino Marinuzzi. Considerada a melhor realização sinfônica de Oswald, recebeu elogios do musicólogo Mário de Andrade, figura central do movimento modernista brasileiro, por sua escrita compacta, equilíbrio perfeito e flexibilidade melódica, especialmente no *Scherzo*. A obra foi apresentada ainda em vida do compositor sob a regência de importantes nomes, como os também compositores Heitor Villa-Lobos (1926) e Francisco Braga (1930), além de Felix Weingartner, que regeu o *Adagio* e o *Scherzo* com a Filarmônica de Viena em viagem ao Brasil em 1922.

Dedicada à esposa Lau (Laudônia), é formada por quatro movimentos: *Allegro moderato*, *Adagio*, *Scherzo* – *Allegro vivace* e *Allegro deciso*. Começa com um tema calmo e ondulante em compasso $\frac{3}{4}$, apresentado pelas cordas e instrumentos de madeira, mas logo aparecem gestos musicais contrastantes e um segundo tema nos metais em *staccato*. Por vezes, o segundo tema parece interromper ou desestabilizar o primeiro; em outros momentos, há uma busca de equilíbrio desses dois impulsos, um mais lírico e outro mais rítmico, quase marcial. No final, um grande movimento cromático do agudo ao grave, do fortíssimo ao pianíssimo, como uma vertigem, abre espaço para uma última aparição do lirismo do primeiro tema e a memória do segundo tema ressoando no tímpano, em um final aberto e misterioso.

O *Adagio*, em compasso quaternário, traz elementos já vistos no *Allegro*, como o cromatismo e o impacto do naipe de metais, começando com o ar de mistério deixado no final do primeiro movimento. Mas aqui, tudo se desenvolve devagar, como se os caminhos fossem encontrados a partir de tentativas, com um resultado sonoro que vai sendo descortinado aos poucos, explorando belíssimas combinações timbrísticas e uma memória do primeiro movimento no final.

O *Scherzo* em 6/8 é luz e movimento. Os temas são claros, há um forte efeito rítmico nas cordas e uma aproximação de ritmos de danças e efeitos miméticos, como as flautas que lembram sons de pássaros e ressaltam a ideia de vivacidade. Toques de clarins anunciam o *Allegro deciso*, que se configura como um movimento de síntese, afirmativo e triunfante, recapitulando, nos seus compassos finais, o tema principal do primeiro movimento.

Na *Sinfonia*, Oswald cria combinações sonoras que vão da penumbra à claridade, utilizando o universo diatônico tonal, o cromatismo e aparições da escala de tons inteiros, explorando todo o peso da orquestra nos momentos grandiosos e criando solos de extrema delicadeza nas cordas e madeiras, em uma obra de incontestável beleza e sólida construção, um dos mais relevantes exemplos do gênero em toda a literatura sinfônica brasileira.

Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra



The Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra was established in 2008, and has since become one of the most successful cultural institutions in Brazil. Led by artistic director and principal conductor Fabio Mechetti, the orchestra comprises 90 musicians from across Brazil, Europe, Asia, and South and North America. It has received numerous accolades and awards, including the Grande Prêmio Concerto in 2020 and 2015, the Carlos Gomes Award for Best Orchestra in 2012, the Best Classical Music Group Award from the São Paulo Art Critics Association, and a Latin GRAMMY nomination in 2020 for an album of works for piano and orchestra by Almeida Prado (Naxos 8.574225). The orchestra presents a diverse range of performances, including educational concerts, open-air presentations, programmes that identify and develop new compositional and conducting talent, and national and international tours. The orchestra's discography includes seven albums with works by several Brazilian composers for The Music of Brazil series on Naxos, as well as various other releases. The ensemble is on track to become the first South American orchestra to record all of Mahler's symphonies. Sala Minas Gerais, the orchestra's headquarters, was inaugurated in Belo Horizonte in 2015, and is one of the main concert halls in South America. www.filarmonica.art.br

Fabio Mechetti



Fabio Mechetti has been artistic director and principal conductor of the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra since its foundation. Under his leadership, the orchestra has received numerous awards, recorded nine albums, including several for Naxos, and undertaken a tour of South America. In 2014, he became the first Brazilian music director of an Asian orchestra when he was appointed principal conductor of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra. In the US, Mechetti conducted the Jacksonville Symphony for 14 years and is now its conductor emeritus. He has also served as music director of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra and Spokane Symphony; resident conductor of the San Diego Symphony; and associate conductor, under Mstislav Rostropovich, of the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington, D.C. As well as making his Carnegie Hall debut with the New Jersey Symphony, he has worked as guest conductor with a number of other North American and international orchestras. Born in São Paulo, he has a Master's in conducting and composition from The Juilliard School, and won the international Malko Competition for young conductors in Denmark in 1989. www.fabiomechetti.com

Henrique Oswald was perhaps the most European of Brazilian composers, having spent a large part of his life in Italy; he also absorbed influences from France and Germany. Oswald's music always retains a lyrical character with qualities of elegance and radiance, which can be heard in the *Sinfonietta*. The expressive *Elegia*, originally conceived for cello and piano, is dedicated to the memory of a friend. With its contrasts between darkness and light, coupled with undeniable beauty, the *Symphony* is regarded as Oswald's finest orchestral achievement and one of the most significant works in the Brazilian orchestral literature.



Henrique
OSWALD
(1852–1931)

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❻	I. —	10:16
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***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra • Fabio Mechetti

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