

## The Analysis of Brazilian Music Characteristics in the “Valsa de Esquina No.8” by Francisco Mignone

การวิเคราะห์ลักษณะเฉพาะของดนตรีแบบบราซิล ในบทเพลง  
“วอลซาดิสกิลลา หมายเลข 8” ประพันธ์โดย ฟรานซิสโก มินโญนี

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify the socio-cultural factors that affected the waltz in Brazil, as well as to specify the features, distinguishing characteristics, and musical meaning that inspired the creation and national significance of the Brazilian Waltz. The freedom of expression and interpretation of the Brazilian Waltz is achieved through the development of a study from the perspective of the hermeneutics of musical meaning and the relational cultural environment. Francisco Mignone excelled at the development of 61 waltzes for which his urban-themed, nationalistic-based works mirrored the early decades of the twentieth century as one of the most known second-generation Brazilian nationalist composers. The prolific nature of Francisco Mignone's waltzes unquestionably merits the moniker 'King of Waltz,' and lends credence to this astonishing claim and also provides piano students and pianists insight into the specific technical and musical challenges and to include a musically satisfying holistic pianistic interpretation in Brazilian Waltz.

**Keywords:** Waltz / Brazilian waltz / Francisco Mignone / Brazilian Culture

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## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาและระบุปัจจัยทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมที่มีอิทธิพลต่อบทเพลงวอลซ์ในประเทศบราซิล รวมทั้งลักษณะเฉพาะและความหมายทางดนตรีที่ทำให้เกิดบทเพลงวอลซ์ที่มีความสำคัญระดับชาติ การแสดงความรู้สึกและการตีความบทเพลงอย่างอิสระของวอลซ์แบบบราซิลเกิดขึ้นจากการศึกษาอรรถปริวรรตศาสตร์ของความหมายทางดนตรีและบริบทความสัมพันธ์ทางวัฒนธรรม ฟรานซิสโก มินโญนี่ เป็นหนึ่งในนักประพันธ์เพลงชาวบราซิลรุ่นที่สองที่เป็นที่รู้จักกันดีในช่วงต้นของศตวรรษที่ 20 ประพันธ์บทเพลงวอลซ์แบบกระแสดานิยมไว้ถึง 61 บทและได้รับฉายาว่าเป็นราชาแห่งเพลงวอลซ์เนื่องจากบทเพลงวอลซ์ของเขามีเนื้อหาที่ลึ้นไหลได้รับความชื่นชม และมีเทคนิคการบรรเลงและเนื้อหาทางดนตรีที่ท้าทาย รวมทั้งมีการตีความบทเพลงแบบองค์รวมอย่างมีสุนทรียศาสตร์

**คำสำคัญ:** วอลซ์ / วอลซ์แบบบราซิล / ฟรานซิสโก มินโญนี่ / วัฒนธรรมบราซิล

## I. Introduction

The complexity of the Brazilian music interpretation is due to the immense variety of musical genre in the society, the different kind of music can be categorized by the region, such as the northeast, the south, the central and western regions. Each of these parts of territory all have their own tradition in music which is unique to others. As such it could involve some implication and complexity Brazilian music interpretation, one would have to take the socio-cultural aspects into consideration regarding Brazilian music<sup>2</sup>.

This study intends to provide a fresh viewpoint on which aspects, and how to interpret and play Brazilian music, primarily Waltzes on Piano by Brazilian Composer

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<sup>2</sup> Claus Schreiner, *Música Brasileira: A History of Popular Music and the People of Brazil* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1993), 158.

- Francisco Mignone, who is a huge representation and one of the most prominent individuals in Brazilian music history<sup>3</sup>.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Francisco Mignone was the Brazilian composer who created the most waltzes, with a total of sixty-one waltzes reflecting largely urban national roots. For obvious reasons, Francisco Mignone and a few of his selected waltzes serve as the research's reference and illustrative.

Not only was the waltz a popular dance type in Brazil, but so were the *Modinha* and *Lundu*. *Modinha*, or "small songs," began in the nineteenth century<sup>4</sup>.

The *modinha* can be thought of as a little aria. Because it served as the foundation for Brazilian National Music, the *modinha* has become significant in Brazilian music history. Slaves from Angola created the *lundu* in Brazil. In Brazil, the *lundu-dance* was performed for the middle class.

Serenade, commonly known as "*Seresta*," is another style of music that has taken root in Brazil. In Brazil, the *seresta* emerged in the twentieth century to rebrand the oldest popular singing tradition: the *serenade*. The "*Seresta*," a social and cultural event that included a musical performance in the streets.

### **The statement of the problem**

The Brazilian Waltz interpretation involve a relevant musical knowledge, complex technical aspects that influenced the waltz, and socio-cultural context in Brazil. This research has the potential to become a centralized role toward development that leads to the higher levels of holistic pianistic interpretation in Brazilian Waltz.

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<sup>3</sup> Bruno Kiefer, *História da Música Brasileira/Dos primórdios ao início do século XX*, Movimento, Vol. 9 (Brazil: Banco Ingles, 1997), 252.

<sup>4</sup> Ari Vasconcelos, *Raízes da música popular brasileira* (Brazil: Rio Fundo, 1991), 183.

## Research objective

This research aims to provide the right conditions to point out the complex aspects of the musical characteristic features of the Brazilian Waltz. Furthermore, this research will assist piano students, tutors, and pianists to acknowledge the musical language of Brazilian waltz as well its achievements in pianistic interpretation.

## II. Literature Review

### Francisco Mignone (1897-1986): Biographical Overview

Francisco Paulo Mignone (born September 3, 1897) is one of the most significant figures in Brazilian classical music, and one of the most important Brazilian composers together with Heitor Villa-Lobos. Mignone, a graduate of the São Paulo Conservatory and subsequently the Milan Conservatory in 1920, returned to São Paulo in 1929 to teach harmony before taking a position at the Escola Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro in 1933. Mignone was a talented composer who wrote solo songs, piano pieces, chamber instrumental works, orchestral works, and choral works almost equally. In addition, Mignone composed five operas and eight ballets. Much of Mignone's music has a strong nationalistic character, influenced by his former schoolmate and teacher, musicologist and writer Mário de Andrade's nationalistic movement. Mignone's compositions are based on folk and popular melodies and styles from his home Brazil<sup>5</sup>.

The lyrics, vivid instrumentation, and improvisatory manner of Mignone's music are well-known<sup>6</sup>. Mignone had a talent for writing in a variety of forms, and his work from the early 1960s onwards is known for its eclecticism; there isn't much else to say about it. During his final years, though, he reverted to nationalistic writing. Francisco Mignone died in Rio de Janeiro on February 2, 1986.

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<sup>5</sup> Bruno Kiefer, *Mignone, Vida e Obra*, Movimento, vol. 15 (Brazil: Republica, 1983), 130.

<sup>6</sup> Vasco Mariz, *Francisco Mignone, O Homem e a Obra*, UERJ (Brazil: Funarte, 1997), 116.

## Research Methodology

The interpretational approach and overview analysis overview of the *Valsa de Esquina n. 8*, in C flat Minor been designed based upon literature review and the researcher's experience as a Brazilian pianist and teacher. The researcher analyzed all three sections (A-B-A form) describing sense of aesthetics and narrations, the complex aspects of technical improvement and musical development, leading the performers to a deeper level of pianistic interpretation and a high level of satisfaction.

### Notes on the *Valsas de Esquina*:

Mignone wrote a total of twelve *Valsas de Esquina*, the majority of which were written in minor keys in the ABA pattern. These waltzes, marked by a deep lyricism, faithfully represent many facets of urban nationalism, especially when they allude to the presence of popular instruments like the guitar or the flute. Many of these pieces have an improvisational feel to them, as well as the usage of chromatic chords.

*Valsa de Esquina n. 8*, in C flat Minor. "In the rhythm of a popular waltz", the score of this happy and joyful piece is recommended, with its melody cascading in octaves. The guitar, with its melodies in singing bass tones, can be heard in the piano's mid-section.

### *Valsa de Esquina No. 8* in C-sharp minor by Francisco Mignone (1897–1986)

#### Analysis Overview

The *Valsa de Esquina* ('Street-Corner Waltz') No. 8 is written in a simple but effective ternary form (ABA). Sections A and B are contrasted by a change from tonic minor to major; the recurrence of section A is only slightly modified. Throughout the piece, Mignone firmly holds to the concept of major-and-minor tonality.

#### Section A

Section A falls into halves, each half consisting of two four-bar phrases and one eight-bar phrase (bars 1–4, 5–8, and 9–16, followed by bars 17–20, 21–24, and



**Example 3** in bars 9-12 shows the melodic details are descending, mm.7-12

In essence, just the last four bars really differ. The first half ends with a half-cadence or imperfect cadence, the last chord being the dominant triad, the second half with a full cadence or perfect cadence, the last chord being the tonic triad.

On the whole, the music is of chordal (homophonic) texture – there is an accompaniment, and there is a melody. Only close to the end of each half, in bars 15-16 and 31-32, contrapuntal (polyphonic) elements in form of chromatic or diatonic scales join in.

There is a secondary dominant (the dominant of the subdominant) in bars 5-6 and 21-22 (see Examples 4-5), and a double dominant (the dominant of the dominant) in bars 13-14 and 25 (see Examples 6-7). In bar 13, Mignone has written down ‘g natural’ instead of ‘f double sharp’ – without any doubt due to practical reasons (see Example 6). The double dominant in bar 25 comes in the guise of a diminished seventh chord (see Example 7).

**Example 4** The dominant of the subdominant in bars 5-6, mm.1-6

**Tempo de valsa caipira**

**Example 5** The dominant of the subdominant in bars 21-22, mm. 18-22

**Example 6** The dominant of the dominant, mm.13-14

**Example 7** The dominant of the dominant in bar 25 and the double dominant in bar 25 comes in the guise of a diminished seventh chord, mm. 23-25

## Section B

Section B, entirely in the parallel (not the mediant) key, is written down in D-flat rather than C-sharp major, either due to practical or atmospheric reasons. Again, the section falls into halves, the first half ending with an imperfect cadence, the second half with a perfect cadence. But this time, the construction of the ‘halves’ is

more complex, the second ‘half’ being slightly longer and touching a further-away key than the first.

The first half, in accordance to section A, consists of two four-bar phrases and one eight-bar phrase (bars 33–36, 37–40, and 41–48). The only harmony worth mentioning is a double dominant in bars 45–46, again in accordance to section A. The second half brings two four-bar phrases and one twelve-bar phrase (bars 49–52, 53–56 and 57–68). Bars 49–56 are a near-representation of bars 33–40 apart from bars 55–56 where an unexpected F major triad seems to head for the mediant key of B-flat minor. But instead, a ‘circle of fifths’ sequence follows: B-flat major 7 (bar 57), E-flat minor (bar 58), A-flat major 7 (bar 59) and D-flat major (bar 60, see Example 8).

**Example 8** An unexpected F major triad and a ‘circle of fifths’ sequence, mm. 54–60

The final four harmonies, fanned out over eight bars, bring the section to a full close: a triad on the second degree (e-flat/g-flat/b-flat in bars 61–62, see Example 9) a tonic triad in six-four position (a-flat/d-flat/f in bars 63–64), a dominant seventh chord (a-flat/c/e-flat/g-flat in bars 65–66) and a tonic triad (d-flat/f/a-flat in bars 67–68,

see Example 9). Note the remarkable all-over construction of these twelve bars: there are four bars with one harmony every bar (bars 57–60, see Example 8), followed by eight bars with one harmony every two bars (bars 61–68). Thus, bars 61–68 are like four bars fanned out over eight bars (see Example 9).

**Example 9** The final four harmonies over eight bars at the end of the section, mm. 59–68

The wide-ranging melody, recalling a violoncello, lies mostly but not entirely in the left hand. The accompaniment, reminiscent of a guitar, comprises of broken and unbroken chords in every register, mixed with charming little scales (see Example 10).

**Example 10** Section B, mm. 33–37

### Recapitulation of section A

The recapitulation is near-faithful to section A. Bars 69–75 and 98/99 are furnished with broken bass octaves, bars 99/100 with a redoubled counter-voice in the right hand and a wide-ranging arpeggio to be performed with both hands, contributing to a conclusive ending (see Examples 11-12).

Example 11 Section A recapitulation, mm. 69-75

69 *a tempo*  
*p bem harpejado o baixo*  
10290

75

Example 12 mm. 96-100

96 *rit.* *até o fim.*  
10290

*f* *m.es.* 2 V

### III. Researcher's notes on the approach to the musical interpretation

In section A, emphasize each musical phrase by 'singing' the melody and ending it with a diminuendo. Observe the breath marks in bars 16 and 84. In bars 17

and 85, highlight the bass without sacrificing the soprano. With the right hand, bring out the upper notes of the octaves, thus creating a concise melodic line. In the whole section and throughout the piece, make the dynamic indications happen.

In section B, the left hand must shape the melodic line from the outset. Take special care of the cases where the two hands alternate in the playing of the melody. Note the accent marks in bars 56, 61, and 63, and put the culminating point of the section (bar 65) into effect. It is recommended to perform bars 43/44 almost like an echo of bars 41/42 (see Examples 13-14) with the final eighth note of the bar, get back to the previous dynamic level. At the end of section A, stay in tempo up to the breath mark as indicated in the score.

**Example 13** Bars 43-44 almost like an echo of bars 41-42, mm. 43-44

**Example 14** The melodic line in the Bars 41-42, mm. 38-42

In the recapitulation of section A, sound the broken bass octaves in a particularly enchanting way. Towards the end, give special impetus to the right-hand octaves (bars 93–99). In order to obtain greater effect, it is recommended to leave

the very last bass octave (bar 99) unbroken (see Example 15). Finish the waltz with bravura.

**Example 15** The end of the waltz, mm. 91-99

The little *staccato* scales in bars 31/32 and the little *portato* scales in bars 67/68 are of considerable importance. Imagine the dropping scales as plucked on the guitar, the rising scales as bowed on the violoncello respectively flute.

## Conclusion

This research will help performers, teachers, and students better comprehend the Brazilian Waltz, resulting in a new viewpoint on how to perceive Brazilian music. This research could also assist non-Brazilian artists in better understanding the characteristics of the Brazilian Waltz.

The freedom of expression and interpretation of the national Waltz will arise from the development of an analysis from the perspective of the hermeneutics of musical meaning and the related cultural environment. In this research, Francisco Mignone's "Valsa de Esquina No.8" illustrates a poetic and lyrical language that exudes

and inspires nostalgia, emotion, and the depths of the Brazilian soul from the enchantment of music.

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