

# José Joaquim Emerico Lobo de Mesquita

The discovery of gold and diamonds in Minas Gerais at the beginning of the eighteenth century led to a migratory movement unprecedented in the history of colonial Brazil. The new population of the region was made up of a mixture of ethnic groups and individuals from various areas, coming from other regions in Brazil or from Europe (mainly Portugal) and Africa. The multiracial society of Minas Gerais was not only divided into masters and slaves, but also included an immense middle stratum without a “*well-defined social structure, characterized by its fluidity and instability, and by its sporadic, uncertain, and aleatoric work opportunities.*”<sup>2</sup>

The first structuring of this society took place through the brotherhoods that appeared in all the villages, towns, and cities in the region. In the absence of regular religious orders--prohibited in Minas Gerais by king Dom João V (1689-1750)--the social, political, cultural, and religious power of these associations was stronger than it was in other parts of Brazil and Portugal. Entry into one of these brotherhoods guaranteed a certain status to the individual. For the Church, they represented material support to worship and to the promotion of religion, since they took charge of the construction of their chapels and of the organization of some religious ceremonies, notably the feast of their patron saint. This particular

situation allowed for the appearance and the development of sacred music with European roots in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais.

Religious music was predominantly produced by commission, whether under annual contracts between the lay associations and a *diretor de música*, or more rarely through an agreement on the occasion of extraordinary celebrations. The director of music frequently exercised multiple functions: composer, conductor, organist, singer, or instrumentalist. Sometimes, two or three of these functions were carried out at the same time. In addition, the director was often the one responsible for managing the group.

At the same time, Minas Gerais witnessed the development of innovative, secular, and domestic genres, the *modinha* and the *lundu*, which apparently did not influence religious composition. Not until Brasília Itiberê da Cunha (1846-1913), Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920), and Francisco Valle (1869-1906), among others, did rhythms and themes from popular music penetrate the world of concert music. Moreover, chamber works by composers from eighteenth-century Minas Gerais are not extant.

The date and place of Lobo de Mesquita's birth is not documented. It is presumed, however, that he was born in Serro, known at the time as Vila do Príncipe, between 1740 and 1750.<sup>3</sup> His name is recorded for the

<sup>2</sup> SOUZA, Laura de Mello e. *Desclassificados do ouro: a pobreza mineira no século XVIII*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1982. p.63.

<sup>3</sup> A birth date of 1746 was suggested by Geraldo Dutra de Moraes, with no documentary proof. See: MORAES, Geraldo Dutra de. *Música barroca mineira*; prefácio de Márcio Antônio da Fonseca e Silva. São Paulo: Conselho Regional de Farmácia do Estado de São Paulo, 1975. 64p.

first time in a ledger kept by the Municipal Council of that *vila*. It establishes that on December 26, 1774 Lobo de Mesquita was compensated for the music performed during the four annual feasts traditionally promoted by the Council. The fact that he was the responsible party in a contract of this kind suggests a minimum of experience. It can be concluded, thus, that he was between twenty and thirty at the time. It is certain, however, that Lobo de Mesquita was a mulatto, possibly the illegitimate son of the Portuguese José Lobo de Mesquita and his slave Joaquina Emerenciana, and that he married Tomásia Onofre do Lório in about 1795. Like other musicians and artists in Minas Gerais, he owned of at least one slave, Teresa Ferreira. It is also possible that he studied with the priests Manuel da Costa Dantas, Manuel de Almeida Silva, and Miguel Bernardo Moreira, but no concrete information about his musical training has been unearthed.

Diamantina, known at the time as Arraial do Tejuco, where Lobo de Mesquita resided from 1783, witnessed intense musical activity in the second half of the eighteenth century. The records of the religious associations reveal the presence of 31 *diretores de música* between 1761 and 1837. In Diamantina, from 1783/84 to 1798, Lobo de Mesquita worked as teacher, organist, and composer. The contract between the composer and the Third Order of Carmel, dated at Diamantina 1789, cites his rank as lieutenant, but corroborating evidence of his military status has not been found.

Lobo de Mesquita's most creative phase as a composer coincided with his activities in Serro and in Diamantina. His extant autographs, all dated, as well as the rare copies that mention the years of his compositions, allow his production to be dated from 1778 to 1803. In 1798 he moved to the city of Vila Rica (present-day Ouro Preto), where he remained for a short while. Finally, Lobo de Mesquita transferred to Rio de Janeiro, the capital of colonial Brazil, where, in December 1801, he signed a contract with the Third Order of Carmel. This document highlights his function as organist, as in Diamantina. He lived out his last years in Rio de Janeiro, where he died in 1805.

His entire output consists of religious music, almost always in Latin. The only exceptions are the Our Father and the Ave Maria sections, in Portuguese, of *Tercio* (CT-MCRF [75]; CT-MIG 14). Most interesting, however, is the discovery, at the Casa de Cultura de Santa

Luzia, of two new compositions by Lobo de Mesquita, published in the present volume: *Congratulamini mihi* (PAMM 02) and *Ave Regina caelorum* (PAMM 04). The uncovering of these pieces attests to the wide dissemination of his music, and encourages optimism about the discovery of other documents that will help to elucidate questions of attribution and to fill gaps in works preserved in incomplete sources.

The composer, to a great degree, avoids instrumental virtuosity, making the intelligibility of the text a priority. This is probably related to the liturgy, but possibly also to the level of technique of the performers available or to the development of musical practice in eighteenth-century Minas Gerais. His writing for voice changes noticeably when the piece is composed for a soloist, as in the case of the Antiphon *Ave Regina caelorum* (CT-MCRF [06]; CT-MIG 05)<sup>4</sup> and the Verse of the Responsory *Cum transisset* (CT-MCRF [38]; CT-MIG 13).<sup>5</sup> In these two examples, the solo is written for contralto, which suggests that Lobo de Mesquita had at his disposal, for special occasions, performers of singular quality. In the *Matins of Holy Saturday* (CT-MCRF [64]; CT-MIG 18)<sup>6</sup> there are frequent solos for each of the voices, which, though less elaborate than those of the pieces for solo voice, indicate that the composer had available a homogeneous, highly proficient ensemble for these occasions.

The writing for the French horn is generally austere, almost percussive, recalling the drums of military music, and the composer's apparent rank as lieutenant. Violins I and II often play in parallel thirds and sixths, and remain for much of the time in first position. The instrumental bass is simple, sparsely figured with one or two figures, rarely three, indicating cadences, modulations and unusual chords. These figures appear almost exclusively in the autographs, rarely in copies.

Textural contrasts are often employed as a structural device: solos, duos, and *tutti* are sequenced with characteristic fluidity. Particularly striking examples of grace and beauty include the Antiphon *Regina caeli laetare* (CT-MCRF [01]; CT-MIG 39) and Lesson IV of Nocturne II of the *Matins of Holy Saturday* (CT-MCRF [64]; CT-MIG 18).

Chant appears in the works of Lobo de Mesquita in various ways. The autograph of the Office, Passion, and Mass *Dominica in Palmis* (CT-MCRF [61]; CT-MIG 3a) includes monophonic incipits for two units, *Asperges-me*

<sup>4</sup> Edited by André Guerra Cotta in: COTTA, André Guerra (org.). *Lobo de Mesquita no Museu da Música de Mariana: homenagem a José Joaquim Emerico Lobo de Mesquita (1746?-1805) no bicentário de seu falecimento*. Mariana, Belo Horizonte: Fundação Cultural e Educacional da Arquidiocese de Mariana, 2005. p.45-51.

<sup>5</sup> Edited by Marcelo Campos Hazan in: COTTA, André Guerra (org.). op. cit., 2005. p.119-122.

<sup>6</sup> Edited by André Guerra Cotta in: CASTAGNA, Paulo (coord.). *Sábado Santo: coordenação musicológica Paulo Castagna; coordenação editorial Carlos Alberto Figueiredo; pesquisa, edição e texto André Guerra Cotta, Paulo Castagna, Carlos Alberto Figueiredo*. Belo Horizonte: Fundação Cultural e Educacional da Arquidiocese de Mariana, 2002. p.49-151. (Acervo da Música Brasileira / Restauração e Difusão de Partituras, v.3)

and *Credo*.<sup>7</sup> The *Mass for Ash Wednesday* (CT-MCRF 49; CT-MIG 16), in turn, includes an interesting alternation of polyphony and figured plainchant, while in other works, such as the Trio *Signatum est* (CT-MCRF 71; CT-MIG 42; PAMM 01), the *cantochão* is presumed due to the absence of a segment of the Latin text.

From the point of view of harmony, one can note in the music of Lobo de Mesquita a striking absence of the inverted subdominant chord, at cadences. One exception is the expressive measure 27 of the Antiphon *Regina caeli laetare* (CT-MCRF [01]; CT-MIG 39),<sup>8</sup> in which a chord on the fourth degree is given added expression through the use of a sixth interval between the vocal and instrumental bass parts. Another characteristic trait is the structural use of a pedal note in the bass in order to prolong the tonic or dominant harmonies (often in the role of secondary tonic). The pedal notes are harmonized in various ways, whether through the alternation of a major chord in root position and another in second inversion (I - IV  $\frac{6}{4}$  ou V - I  $\frac{6}{4}$ ), or through the concatenation of the three fundamental degrees.

The treatment of the melody is flexible; see for example, the five opening measures of the *Asperges-me* in the aforementioned *Dominica in Palmis* (CT-MCRF [61]; CT-MIG 3a).<sup>9</sup> Irregular phrases are also not uncommon, as illustrated by the nine opening measures of the *Veni sponsa Christi* published in this volume (CT-MIG 47; PAMM 05).

Another interesting stylistic detail is his treatment of the ninth. This interval was evolving throughout the eighteenth century, and Lobo de Mesquita used it with care: the minor ninth, employed in an entirely melodic way, appears more frequently than the natural major, which is extremely rare in his works. The minor ninth is almost always used as an appoggiatura or *broderie* of the dominant note. The melodic line determines and justifies its appearance. Other harmonic particularities such as, for example, parallel fifths and octaves, unexpected voice-leading effects, doubled thirds and sevenths, and incomplete chords appear on occasion in his works. All this is, ultimately, cause and consequence of a style that is flexible, transparent and effortless.

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<sup>7</sup> Edited by Maria Inês Junqueira Guimarães. LOBO DE MESQUITA, José Joaquim Emerico. *Dominica in Palmis (1782)*. Office, Passion et Messe pour le Dimanche de Rameaux. Lyon: Editions A Cœur Joie, 1999. p.5, 96.

<sup>8</sup> Edited by André Guerra Cotta in: COTTA, André Guerra (org.). op. cit., 2005. p.53-65.

<sup>9</sup> LOBO DE MESQUITA, José Joaquim. op. cit., 1999. p.104-105.