

Foreword

A Most Necessary Art

I am a declared enemy of useless social formalities, forewords included: bronze is both heavy and tastes bad. Two facts, however, effectively undid my dislike for this kind of activity and sent me into a writing frenzy. It was my friend Paulo Castagna who asked me to preface this volume, and he insisted, so I was unable to turn him down; and his endeavor seems so extremely important that it deserves all the support that it can get. I am thrilled to introduce a project devoted to rescue *Mineiro* music. Editing early music is a dying art, one that once was almost coterminous with musicological research, only to be expelled from the core of the discipline in more recent times. That editions are out of fashion does not make them any less necessary. Similarly, the disdain of the young-and-eager New Musicologist who exudes De Certeau, Spivak, Bhabha, Derrida, and Foucault through all of his or her pores does nothing to improve the difficult task of editing music. Editing music is easy, they believe; it is mechanical and repetitive, it does not involve much interpretation. Just pick up your sources, copy every line in your score, and there you have it, your finished piece, ready for performance. Who could ever care about such a simple chore?

They are wrong. Their scorn and contempt are good only to cloud the most attractive sides of the business. First, there is the curiosity: only someone happy with the present state of knowledge can ignore the itch that drives us out of the armchair to research lost or forgotten music. Personally, after a good quarter of a century in the business, I still have not been able to cure curiosity's tingling; an unspoiled pile of

music manuscripts still is too big a temptation to let pass in front of me without at least perusing it--which soon has me sitting down and transcribing a sample, just to see how it sounds, and then a piece, and then putting together some concert project, and then having it recorded, and then... May whichever divinity in which the reader believes bless Paulo and his team: they have spared all of us, the perpetually curious musicians of this world, much effort in locating sources, cataloguing, transcribing, and comparing them to each other.

Beyond personal desires, musical edition is indispensable, socially and academically. Without knowing the music, how are we supposed to assess past composers, schools, trends, and eras? Through the musicians' teachers, mentors, employment records, and wills? Through their lists of girlfriends and acquaintances? I do not wish to imply that one cannot gather important knowledge from any of these sources; quite on the contrary, I am a firm believer in managing as many kinds of documents as one is able to find and process. Yet there is something unique to music: it brings up information that is found nowhere else in the entire source spectrum. This is musical knowledge, *bien sûr*; it requires a special sensitivity for one to be able to make sense of it. If you listen carefully, however, you will hear what music has to say – it seems so obvious that it is painful to write it down.

Music, which affects every social rank, every group, almost every person, constitutes much of society's symbolic body. Early music permeated the everyday of history to an extent that is seldom recognized;

this music merged into the mass of condensed social experience of the past, which, in turn, forms the historical self of any human group. Not to know the music, then, means to ignore an important part of what that group is. If we ever want to know what we are as *Americanos*, Castilian- or Portuguese-speaking natives of this continent, we are obliged to edit, perform, enjoy, and study the music: there is no way around it.

Now, without edited music, performance, enjoyment and study are simply impossible. As to scholarship, interpretation is possible solely on the basis of good editions. And only a fool could claim that we have all the editions we need. Enormous sectors of the vast landscape of written music are unknown to most or all of us, consigned to oblivion in some dormant library. This is why the failure to edit music is suicidal when seen from the South: by not editing early scores, by not bringing them back to life, by not examining them in search of hints of the people who once cultivated them, we are slowly killing our memories – which amounts to killing ourselves. Musicology's crisis is a Northern phenomenon. We need to be careful in dealing with it on our side of the continent.

The effort of rescuing music from Minas Gerais that this volume inaugurates cannot be sufficiently praised. Many of the compositions are unknown, not only to the general public, but also to scholars. Sources disseminated throughout the state of Minas, but also from Rio and São Paulo, were gathered, carefully compared to each other, and their divergent readings duly noted. This tedious, yet fascinating, process lies at the core of what editing music is. Lay people seldom realize that a good edition is no less an interpretation than a musical performance or an analytical essay: in all these practices, the meaning of a musical text has to be construed down to the smallest details, through a critical reading of all of the available information.

A good editor is not a machine-like being that perfunctorily constructs a score from the sources. An editor rather works like a detective, who gathers even the most negligible clue. S/he is also a hermeneut that brings together those clues into a coherent, meaningful musical picture. Not just that: an editor is a musician, acutely conscious of the values present in the object on which s/he works. An editor often turns into a composer, filling in the notes, voices, sections not provided in the sources but necessary for public performance. An editor ultimately is an artist, in all senses of the word.

Artistry is what illuminated the editions in the *Acervo da Música Brasileira* previously realized by Paulo, Marcelo Hazan, and several other scholars, in a project that shone with its own light, to become a model for early music editions in *América*. This new *Patrimônio Arquivístico-Musical*, now just *Mineiro*, introduces further refinement in the working techniques, in terms of the comparison of several different sources for each edition. The concentration on figures such as Emerico Lobo de Mesquita is also praiseworthy, coming after the liturgical, hence cultural, focus that informed the previous project. The author may be dead somewhere else, but even post mortem s/he remains the main cultural and political actor; without him or her, agency gets clouded. Much more than half a century has passed since Francisco Curt Lange called the world's attention to the rich religious music tradition of Minas Gerais; yet we still ignore much of who Parreiras Neves, Lobo de Mesquita, Gomes da Rocha, or Dies de Oliveira really were. This printed *Patrimônio* enlarges our knowledge of one of the most important *Americano* schools of Classical music and promotes one of the key historical figures of all Brazilian music – with all the artistry that the task demands. Please join me in welcoming the volume and the series.

Bernardo Illari
University of North Texas (Denton, USA)