

PAULINYI, Zoltan. The first appearance of *sotto le corde* instruction at Flausino Vale's Variations upon Franz Lehár's song 'Paganini' for violin alone. (Romania, 10 June 2010) **No. 14 plus minus**. ISSN 2067-6972. Available at <<http://no14plusminus.ro/2010/06/10/flausino-vale-and-the-sotto-le-corde-technique/>> Accessed on 24 June 2010.

— Zoltan Paulinyi —

The first appearance of *sotto le corde* instruction at Flausino Vale's Variations upon Franz Lehár's song 'Paganini' for violin alone

ABSTRACT: Flausino Vale (Flausino Valle), important Brazilian violinist of the first half of XX century, systematically composed original works, transcriptions and arrangements for violin alone. Recently found new scores support his fame as a creative and virtuoso violinist. In his "Variations upon Franz Lehár's song 'Paganini' " dated from about the 1930s, there is a surprising instruction "*sotto le corde*" which means the player must draw the bow under the strings in order to play the first and the last strings simultaneously, anticipating a technique explored by contemporary experimentalist composers.

KEYWORDS: Flausino Vale, Flausino Valle, *sotto le corde*, variations, violin alone

Introduction

On strings literature, "*sotto le corde*" means to play with the bow "under the string". Since it is a rare instruction even for contemporary music, a recently discovered score by Flausino Vale adds new perspectives for compositional studies and musicological researches both in historical and contemporary fields.

This article summarizes the first biographical note about Flausino Vale in English, which explains the historical importance of his scores for solo violin. The *sotto le corde* technique is explained in details. The full score dated from the 1930s is published here for non-commercial use granted by Flausino Vale's heirs to this edition author.

About Flausino Vale

Flausino Rodrigues Valle (Brazil, January 6th, 1894; Brazil, April 4th, 1954), son of Francisco Hermenegildo Rodrigues Valle and Augusta Campos Valle, is better known as Flausino Vale. He was born in Barbacena, a small city in Minas Gerais State. He has never left Brazil and made little travels for Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian Federal District during the first half of XX century.

Flausino Vale was introduced to the art of the violin in 1904 by his uncle, João Augusto de Campos, who studied with Manuel Joaquim de Macedo (1847; 1925), a Brazilian virtuoso descendant from the school of Hubert Léonard and Henri Vieuxtemps. Macedo led the Covent Garden Orchestra between ca.1867 to 1871.

Flausino Vale concluded his violin course in four years and half playing all the Paganini's Caprices and Gaviniés' studies. In 1912, he moved to Belo Horizonte, the new Capital of Minas Gerais State, where he got the Bachelor degree in Law in 1923. He became an active lawyer until his retirement in 1943. Nevertheless, his dedication to music was continuous: he played the violin professionally and taught the history of music until his death. He played at the cinemas, balls, weddings, and was the *spalla* of the Belo Horizonte Symphonic Concerts Society Orchestra since its beginning in 1925 during almost 10 years, also appearing as soloist.

Vale had very few violin pupils, mainly during one semester as Prof. Marinuzzi's substitute. His first unaccompanied recital happened only in 1935, where he played his own compositions among other Brazilian works, as the Marcos Salles cadence for Tartini's Sonata in g minor. All of his appearances were well received by the press critics, who considered him an artist of international recognition.

In 1934, Levindo Furquim Lambert, the director of the Belo Horizonte Conservatory, nominated Flausino for the cathedra of "History of Music" and "National Folklore". He dedicated himself on this subject with strong support from the musicologist Curt Lange, eventually publishing the "Brazilian musical folklore elements" (1936) and "Musicians of Minas Gerais" (1938).

Flausino Vale's compositions represent the Brazilian national identity ideology in early XX century because of the landscape and nature musical elements blended with his inner feelings. He composed an album of 26 original characteristic and concertant preludes for solo violin, but published only few pieces among them: "Batuque", "Casamento na roça" and "Ao pé da fogueira". This last one became internationally famous because Jascha Heifetz, not knowing Vale was a contemporary living composer, republished it with a piano part added and recorded the piece in 1945 with Emanuel Bay in November 29th 1945 at the World Broadcasting Decca Studios, NYC. "Ao pé da fogueira" (in English meaning "at the fire foot") is a characteristic piece in the mood of the Brazilian St. John's parties which happen during the winter nights in June/July. There is a true story testified by Giannetti that, when Zino Francescatti played that piece in Belo Horizonte in 1948, Flausino Vale got a way to talk to him at the hotel in order to teach him to play it at the frog (FRÉSCA, 2008, p.61, 143-144).

Although Flausino Vale was known as the "Brazilian Paganini" by Villa-Lobos, recently discovered scores show he could also be called as the "Brazilian Kreisler" because of dozens of transcriptions he made mainly for solo violin with or without piano.

Most of his manuscripts are mysteriously missing, remaining only photocopies unorganizedly archived by his heirs. Such documents are the base for the most of musicological studies about Vale's works. Among them, there is a brilliant original solo piece, a set of variations upon Franz Lehár's 'Paganini' song, which surprisingly asks the violinist to play "*sotto le corde*" at the end. Although there is no date on the manuscript, it is listed on a letter Vale wrote to Francisco Mignone in 1940 (FRÉSCA, 2008, p.100-101) expressing his desire to publish the work along with other transcriptions and arrangements.

The 'Paganini song' is a short air in *E♭* found at Franz Lehár's (1870-1948) homonym operetta. Flausino Vale arranged it to G, adding two instrumental variations in a modern French school style based on violinistic patterns. He divide the piece in three parts, the first being the theme, the second a "*da capo*" in harmonics, the third repeating the variation adding and changing ornaments with a variety of bow strokes.

About the *sotto le corde* technique

The "*sotto le corde*" instruction is usually connected to expanded techniques required in contemporary pieces, like the Antunes' "Trio em lá pis" (1974) for voice, cello and

piano. The player must insert the bow under the strings, turning the hair upward in order to play the first and the last strings at the same time, so the intervallic possibilities raise two octaves. Of course this is easier on a violoncello or a contrabass, but it is safe on a violin with a correct bridge height as well. The modern bow concavity prevents it from damaging the violin table. There is no big concern for the left hand, but the right hand must get used to support the rotated bow. The thumb, acting as the bow fulcrum, may be abducted in order to relieve the weight on the little finger. In this case, it becomes more difficult to play at the lower half of the bow because of the reduce flexibility of the wrist in this altered position. For the deterred player, Flausino Vale wrote an *ossia* in harmonics for the last four measures.

Flausino Vale's variations upon song 'Paganini' also appears in a second manuscript with few differences in some measures pointed out in this edition. Further references about Flausino Vale available in Portuguese are the analysis of his 26 preludes by Alvarenga (1993) and a complete biographical text by Camila Frésca (2008 and 2007). Antunes (2005) wrote more about expanded techniques on winds and strings.

Musical example

Full score (4 pages) of Flausino Vale's *Variations upon Franz Lehár's song 'Paganini'* for violin alone. Edited and published for cultural purposes (non-commercial) with permission of Flausino Valle's heirs: Guatémoc Rodrigues Terra do Valle, Huáscar R.T. do Valle, Araken R.T. do Valle.

Conclusion

The "*sotto le corde*" technique is difficult to learn and apply, but it extends in two octaves the double-stop intervallic range for the stringed instruments. Although better suited to violoncello and contrabass, the recently discovered Flausino Vale's "Variations upon Lehár's 'Paganini' song" shows its successful use for the violin as well. This piece dated from the 1930s is probably the first one ever written applying this technique, showing its use in a traditional styled composition.

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to Yascha Heifetz,
the Paganini of XX century.

Variations upon song 'Paganini'

theme from Franz Lehár's Paganini operetta

Flausino Vale (1894-1954)

Non-commercial edition
granted to Zoltan Paulinyi.

For solo violin

Nº.1 [Moderato]

f

[Andante]

f *p*

4 9 14 20 25 30 36

Nº.2

pizz. *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

42 46

p *f*

sul tasto

50

53

57

61

64

ten ten ten

69

73

78

83

Nº3

86

talão

89

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff (50) features a melodic line with a dashed line above it and two 'V' markings. The second staff (53) continues the melodic line with various ornaments. The third staff (57) includes triplets and a 'V' marking. The fourth staff (61) has a triplet, a quintuplet, and a '1' marking. The fifth staff (64) includes the lyrics 'ten ten ten', a 'V' marking, and a dynamic marking of *f*. The sixth staff (69) features triplets, a 'V' marking, and a dynamic marking of *f*. The seventh staff (73) continues the melodic line. The eighth staff (78) includes a dynamic marking of *f*, a '1' marking, and a dynamic marking of *p*. The ninth staff (83) is marked 'Nº3' and includes fingerings '1 2 3 4' and '1 2 1 2 1 1 1 2 3'. The tenth staff (86) includes a dynamic marking of *pp*, a '4 0' marking, a '1' marking, and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The eleventh staff (89) includes a 'V' marking, a '4' marking, a '1' marking, and a dynamic marking of *pp*.

Musical score for '2/07/10-Variations upon song 'Paganini''. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of ten staves of music, numbered 92 through 112. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. Trills are marked with 'tr'. Vibrato is marked with 'V'. A '4 ricochet' instruction is present at measure 94. A 'sul G' instruction is present at measure 97. The score concludes with a double bar line at measure 112.

112 [Ossia] pizz.

Altered measures 65-67, 75 & 98 on second manuscript: