

THE MUSIC OF
BRAZIL

Francisco
MIGNONE

Complete
Violin Sonatas

Emmanuele Baldini,
Violin

Lucas Thomazinho,
Piano



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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Francisco Mignone (1897–1986)

Complete Violin Sonatas

Francisco Mignone was part of the first generation of modernist Brazilian composers, one of a triumvirate whose other members were Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959) and Camargo Guarnieri (1907–1993). Born exactly ten years after the former and ten years before the latter, Mignone shared some of the qualities for which his two near contemporaries were most admired: like Villa-Lobos, he had a gift for melody and facility for free-flowing composition which enabled him to write works that instantly communicated with audiences; having attained a mastery of composition through both practice and long, in-depth studies, meanwhile, he achieved results with the kind of finish and sophistication for which Guarnieri's music is renowned.

Throughout his career, Mignone was active as a pianist, flautist, conductor and teacher. Born in São Paulo, the son of Italian flautist Alferio Mignone, he began playing flute and piano at a young age and by the age of 13 was performing in small orchestras. In 1913 he earned a place at the São Paulo Conservatory, where one of his fellow students was writer and musicologist Mário de Andrade (1893–1945). At this time, Mignone also played in street bands, writing popular pieces under the pseudonym Chico Bororó.

In 1916, while still a student at the Conservatory, and having already written his first songs and some solo piano pieces, Mignone created his first work for violin and piano: the *Sonata in G major*. It received its premiere at the Conservatory the following year, with violinist Zacarias Autuori joined by the composer himself at the piano. We know that there was at least one more performance later that year of the *Sonata*, of which only the first movement remains (an impetuous and impassioned *Allegro*, with Schubertian reminiscences), which may well indicate that it was well received.

In 1917, Mignone completed his studies in piano, flute and composition at the Conservatory and wrote his first works for chamber and symphony orchestra. The following year he made his debut as a soloist at the Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro, performing the opening movement of the Grieg *Piano Concerto*, as part of a concert that also featured excerpts from his own works, including the symphonic poem *Caramuru* and the *Suite campestre*. The *Sonata in A major* (1919) dates from this period of rapid career progression. It was premiered in 1920 by Mignone and violinist Torquato Amore. In three movements – *Allegro moderato*, *Andante*, *Allegro non troppo ma deciso* – it is a substantial work and one that abides by the conventions of the genre (the first movement is a classic *Allegro*; the second is lyrical and *cantabile* in nature; and the third is in rondo form).

The *Sonata in A major* reflects what it meant for a young composer such as Mignone to be 'modern' in the Brazil of the 1910s, namely following the turn-of-the-century French aesthetic by emulating the music of figures such as Fauré or Debussy. In terms of their French influence, these early sonatas for violin and piano by Mignone resemble Villa-Lobos's works of the same period – notably his first two *Sonata-Fantasias*, which also date from the early 20th century.

Mignone left Brazil in 1920 to continue his studies in Europe, where he remained for most of the next decade, composing, among other works, his first opera, *O contratador de diamantes*. When he returned to Brazil in 1929, he began teaching at the São Paulo Conservatory, where he renewed his friendship with Mário de Andrade, who was also on the staff by then. The latter had just published his novel *Macunaíma* and the *Ensaio sobre música brasileira* ('Essay on Brazilian Music'), and his advocacy of musical nationalism was at its peak. Already interested in folk and popular sources, Mignone intensified his work in this direction under Andrade's influence.

His relationship with nationalism did not, however, run completely smoothly. Looking back on his career in 1968 he said:

Supported by the warm and spontaneous friendship of Mário de Andrade, I became embroiled in nationalist music and ... under a kind of compulsion, wrote *Quatro fantasias brasileiras*, for piano and orchestra, *Maracatu de Chico rei*, *Festa das igrejas* and *Sinfonia do trabalho* ... But when I think about my nationalist phase, I must admit I wasn't happy with what I was producing. In order to hide from myself, I spent much of my time working as an accompanist and orchestral conductor...¹

Mignone did in fact seek out new experiences in his maturity. From 1960, when he was already over 60 himself, he spent a decade composing atonal pieces. His *Violin Concerto* (1960) dates from this period, as do the rest of his sonatas for violin and piano. The first of these, entitled simply *Sonata* and dated 1962, appears in the composer's catalogues but has never been located.

The *Sonata for Violin and Piano, No. 1* dates from 1964. Curiously, it was only at this point that Mignone began to number his works in the genre. The opening *Lento* begins with a long melody for the violin, which shifts between neighbouring notes and helps structure the first section by also acting as a source

of shorter motifs. These long violin phrases can be found in all three movements, while the piano's vocabulary is made up of fragments derived from material given to the violin, in addition to chords and arpeggios.² In a way, the second movement, *Allegretto amabile*, forms an axis around which are arranged the *Lento* and the *Moderato energico* finale, both of which are notable for frequent changes of tempo and metre.

This sonata (the most complex of the three numbered works) explores series of pitches, but not in a wholly rigorous manner. According to the academic Esdras Rodrigues, 'Mignone's series do not normally use all twelve notes, functioning instead as long clusters, in which repeated notes can be found, despite a degree of care taken to avoid them.'³ The work also features clearly tonal themes and free atonal procedures. The work is dedicated to violinist Mariuccia Iacovino and her pianist husband Arnaldo Estrella, who gave its premiere in Rio de Janeiro in November 1966.

The next two sonatas were also written in 1966, the same year as the unusual *Concerto duplo for violin, piano and orchestra*, also dedicated to Iacovino and Estrella. *Sonata No. 2*, completed in June, is in four movements: *Moderato*, *Intermezzo: Calmo e con ponderazione*, *Recitativo* and *Finale: Allegro*. It contains many short, contrasting sections, associated with the absence of themes as organising entities. This highlights the work's fragmented character, in both the violin and the piano part.

In the December of the same year, Mignone completed his *Sonata No. 3*, which is actually a reworked version of his *Sonata for Flute and Piano* (1962), most of whose minor but plentiful modifications amount to changes of rhythm, the addition of some bars and omission of others, and the development of phrases. Featuring Brazilian rhythmic and melodic elements, its three movements are headed *Allegro tranquillo*, *Andante molto sostenuto* and *Rondó – Allegro scherzoso* respectively. The sonata has a more delicate texture, greater balance between the instruments and greater clarity of form than its predecessors, as well as lacking their fragmentary character. *Sonata Nos. 2* and *3* were both premiered by Iacovino and Estrella, in 1966 and 1967, at the Sala Cecília Meireles in Rio de Janeiro.

In the 1970s, Mignone returned to tonal composition and wrote two more operas: *O chalaça* (1976) and *O sargento de milícias* (1978). In 1977, having turned 80, he told an interviewer, 'When I rework, I reproach myself. Reviewing my output, I think little will remain. Some pieces would have been better left unpublished. Generally speaking, I condemn all my atonal music.'⁴

Three years later, however, in a letter to musicologist Vasco Mariz, Mignone made a statement that perhaps summarises his complex, and at times contradictory relationship with nationalism and with the other compositional trends of the 20th century: 'At my advanced age, I can say I'm lord and master, *de jure* and *de facto*, of all the processes of composition and de-composition available for our use today and tomorrow ... Anything can be realised through art, as long as the work carries a message of beauty and leaves the listener wanting to hear it again and again. Is the same not true of all the arts?'⁵

Mignone's catalogue includes another six original works for violin and piano, and at least seven further transcriptions. The sonatas, however, are his most ambitious works for this pairing, and illustrate the different concerns that guided his artistic creation. This album, which presents the world premiere recordings of *Sonatas Nos. 1 to 3*, shows them to be some of the most significant such works to have come out of Brazil. It is to be hoped that they will soon earn their rightful place in both the Brazilian and the international repertoire.

Camila Fresca

English translation: Susannah Howe

¹ Interview with the *Jornal do Brasil*, 6 April 1968, cited in Mariz, Vasco (ed.), *Francisco Mignone, o homem e a obra* ('Francisco Mignone, the man and his work'). Rio de Janeiro: Funarte-UERJ, 1997, pp.45–46.

² Rodrigues, Esdras, *Francisco Mignone, experimentação nas três sonatas para violino e piano* (1964–66) ('Francisco Mignone, experimentation in the three sonatas for violin and piano') in *Per Musi*. Belo Horizonte, v.5/6, 2002, p.85.

³ Idem, *ibidem*, p.84.

⁴ Interview with the *Jornal do Brasil*, 17 April 1977, cited in Mariz, Vasco (ed.). *Francisco Mignone...*, p.47.

⁵ Mariz, Vasco (ed.). *Francisco Mignone...*, p.48.

Francisco Mignone (1897–1986)

A Integral das Sonatas para Violino e Piano

Junto de Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) e Camargo Guarnieri (1907-1993), Francisco Mignone (1897-1986) forma o triunvirato da primeira geração de compositores modernistas. Nascido exatamente 10 anos depois de Villa e 10 anos antes de Guarnieri, Mignone reúne em si algumas das mais admiradas características de ambos: dono de um melodismo e uma facilidade de compor transbordante, era capaz de escrever obras que criassem uma comunicação imediata com a audiência, tal qual Villa-Lobos; músico forjado na prática do ofício, mas também por um extenso e aprofundado período de estudos, dominava completamente a escritura musical, e sua obra possui o acabamento e sofisticação que são marca registrada de Camargo Guarnieri.

Ao longo da vida, Francisco Mignone atuou como pianista, flautista, regente e professor. Nascido em São Paulo, filho do flautista italiano Alferio Mignone, ele se iniciou na música ainda na infância e, aos 13 anos, já se apresentava em pequenas orquestras. Em 1913, ingressou no Conservatório Dramático e Musical de São Paulo, sendo colega de Mário de Andrade (1893-1945). Nessa época, participava de serenatas e compunha peças populares, sob o pseudônimo de Chico Bororó.

Em 1916, ainda estudante do Conservatório, Francisco Mignone, que já havia escrito as primeiras canções e algumas peças para piano solo, compõe pela primeira vez para violino e piano: nascia a *Sonata em sol maior*, estreada no ano seguinte no Conservatório Dramático, com o violinista Zacarias Autuori e o próprio autor ao piano. Dessa obra, da qual restou apenas o primeiro movimento (um impetuoso e apaixonado Allegro, de ares schubertianos), sabemos que houve pelo menos mais uma interpretação no mesmo ano, o que pode indicar uma boa acolhida.

Em 1917, Mignone conclui os estudos de piano, flauta e composição no Conservatório e escreve suas primeiras obras para orquestra de câmara e sinfônica. No ano seguinte estreia como solista no Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro, interpretando o primeiro movimento do *Concerto para piano* de Grieg, numa apresentação que ainda teve trechos de obras suas, como o poema sinfônico *Caramuru* e a *Suíte campestre*. É desse período de impulso na carreira de intérprete e compositor que nasce a *Sonata em lá maior* (1919), estreada em 1920 com o violinista Torquato Amore e o próprio autor ao piano. Com três movimentos – Allegro moderato, Andante, Allegro non troppo ma deciso – é uma obra grandiosa, escrita dentro dos cânones do gênero (primeiro movimento um Allegro clássico; segundo lírico e cantabile; terceiro em forma de rondó).

A *Sonata em lá maior* espelha o que era, para um compositor em torno dos 20 anos de idade como era Mignone, ser “moderno” no Brasil da década de 1910: compor segundo a estética da música francesa da virada do século XIX para o XX, emulando a música de autores como Fauré e Debussy. Nesse sentido, essas primeiras sonatas para violino e piano de Francisco Mignone se assemelham à produção de Heitor Villa-Lobos no período, no que diz respeito à influência francesa – bem expressas nas duas primeiras “sonatas fantasias” do autor carioca, igualmente escritas na década de 1910.

Em 1920, Francisco Mignone partiu para estudar na Europa, onde permaneceu por quase toda a década. Lá escreveu sua primeira ópera, *O contratador de diamantes*. Quando retornou ao Brasil em 1929, o compositor passou a lecionar no Conservatório Dramático e Musical, retomando sua amizade com Mário de Andrade, que também tinha se tornado professor da instituição. Mário havia acabado de lançar *Macunaíma* e o *Ensaio sobre música brasileira*, e seu trabalho em prol da criação de uma música nacional estava no auge. Sob essa forte influência, Francisco Mignone, que já tinha por si só interesse pelas fontes populares, aprofunda seu trabalho nessa direção.

No entanto, a relação de Mignone com o nacionalismo não se deu sem ruídos. Em 1968, revendo sua trajetória, ele afirmou:

amparado pela cordial e espontânea amizade de Mário de Andrade, embrenhei-me no cipoal da música nacionalista e [...] compus, compelido, *Quatro fantasias brasileiras*, para piano e orquestra, *Maracatu de Chico rei*, *Festa das igrejas* e *Sinfonia do trabalho* [...] Mas, voltando à minha fase nacionalista, devo declarar que não andava contente com o que produzia. Dediquei-me, para esconder-me de mim mesmo, a acompanhar ao piano, reger orquestras [...]¹.

De fato, Mignone buscava novas experiências na maturidade. A partir de 1960, portanto com mais de 60 anos, o artista passa uma década compondo peças atonais. É desse momento de virada o *Concerto para violino* (1960), bem como as demais sonatas para violino e piano que escreveu. A primeira delas, intitulada apenas *Sonata* e com data de 1962, consta nos catálogos do compositor mas nunca foi localizada.

A *Sonata para violino e piano n.1* é de 1964. Curiosamente, é só neste momento que ele passa a numerar suas obras para esta formação. O primeiro movimento, Lento, inicia-se com uma longa melodia ao violino, que se move em tons vizinhos e ajuda a organizar a seção inicial, servindo ainda como fonte de motivos mais curtos. Essas longas frases ao violino podem ser encontradas nos três movimentos da peça, enquanto o piano utiliza um vocabulário formado de fragmentos derivados de materiais dados ao violino, além de acordes e arpejos². O segundo movimento, Allegretto amabile, é de certa forma um eixo em torno do qual tanto o primeiro quanto o último movimento, um Moderato enérgico, organizam-se, sendo ambos marcados por frequentes mudanças de tempo e métrica.

Séries de alturas são exploradas nesta sonata (a mais complexa das três), mas não de forma estrita. Segundo o pesquisador Esdras Rodrigues, “as séries de Mignone normalmente não utilizam todas as doze notas, antes funcionam como longos aglomerados de notas ou conjuntos, em que notas repetidas podem ser encontradas, apesar de uma certa preocupação em evitá-las”³. Além delas, há ainda temas claramente tonais e procedimentos atonais livres. A *Sonata n.1* é dedicada ao casal Mariuccia Iacovino (violino) e Arnaldo Estrella (piano), que a estreou no Rio de Janeiro em novembro de 1966.

As duas sonatas seguintes foram escritas também em 1966, mesmo ano de um incomum concerto duplo para violino, piano e orquestra, igualmente dedicado ao casal Iacovino-Estrella. A *Sonata n.2*, finalizada em junho, traz quatro movimentos: Moderato, Intermezzo - calmo e con ponderazione, Recitativo e Finale – Allegro. É uma obra com grande número de pequenas seções contrastantes, associadas à ausência de temas como entidades organizadoras, o que ressalta seu caráter fragmentado, característica que se observa tanto no violino quanto no piano.

Em dezembro do mesmo ano, Francisco Mignone conclui a *Sonata n.3 para violino e piano*. Trata-se, na verdade, de uma versão retrabalhada da *Sonata para flauta e piano* (1962), na qual alterações rítmicas, adesão e supressão de compassos e desdobramentos de frases perfazem a maioria das pequenas mas abundantes modificações. Allegro tranquillo, Andante molto sostenuto e Rondó – Allegro scherzoso são os três movimentos da peça, que, além da presença de elementos rítmicos e melódicos brasileiros, possui características como uma textura mais delicada, maior equilíbrio entre os instrumentos e maior clareza na forma, sem o caráter fragmentário das sonatas anteriores. As duas obras foram novamente estreadas pelo casal Iacovino-Estrella, em 1966 e 67 na Sala Cecília Meireles, no Rio de Janeiro.

Na década de 1970, Francisco Mignone retomou a composição tonal e compôs outras duas óperas: *O chalaça* (1976) e *O sargento de milícias* (1978). Em 1977, ao completar 80 anos, declarou em uma entrevista: “Fazendo uma reciclagem, me condeno profundamente [...] Numa revisão de minha obra, pouco sobrará. Algumas músicas, melhor que nem tivessem sido publicadas. Em geral, condeno toda a minha música atonalista”⁴.

Três anos depois, contudo, em carta ao musicólogo Vasco Mariz, Mignone deu uma declaração que talvez sintetize a complexa, e por vezes contraditória, relação que desenvolveu com a escola nacionalista e com as demais correntes composicionais do século XX: “Na idade provecta a que cheguei, posso afirmar que sou senhor e dono, de direito e de fato, de todos os processos de composição e decomposição que se fazem e usam hoje e amanhã [...] Tudo se pode realizar em arte, desde que a obra traga uma mensagem de beleza e deixe no ouvinte a vontade de querer ouvir mais vezes as obras. Não acontece assim também nas outras artes?”⁵.

O catálogo de Francisco Mignone conta com outras seis obras originais para violino e piano, e pelo menos outras sete transcrições. As sonatas representam, contudo, o que de mais ambicioso o autor escreveu para a formação, e ilustram os diferentes anseios que guiaram sua criação artística. Agora, que se realiza a primeira gravação do conjunto dessas obras (Sonatas n.1–3), pode-se constatar que as sonatas para violino e piano de Francisco Mignone estão entre o que de mais importante se escreveu para o gênero no Brasil. Espera-se que elas ganhem o espaço que merecem no repertório brasileiro e internacional.

Camila Fresca

¹ Entrevista de Francisco Mignone ao *Jornal do Brasil*, 06.04.1968 in Mariz, Vasco (org.). *Francisco Mignone, o homem e a obra*. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte-UERJ, 1997, p.45-46.

² Rodrigues, Esdras. Francisco Mignone, experimentação nas três sonatas para violino e piano (1964-66) in *Per Musi*. Belo Horizonte, v.5/6, 2002, p.85.

³ Idem, *ibidem*, p.84.

⁴ Entrevista de Francisco Mignone ao *Jornal do Brasil*, 17.04.1977 in Mariz, Vasco (org.). *Francisco Mignone, o homem e a obra*, p.47.

⁵ Mariz, Vasco (org.). *Francisco Mignone, o homem e a obra*, p.48.

Emmanuele Baldini



Photo: Fernando Ruz

Emmanuele Baldini was born in Trieste, Italy. After studies in his hometown, he furthered his violin training in Geneva, Salzburg and Berlin, studying conducting with Isaac Karabtchevsky and Frank Shipway. From an early age, Baldini garnered prizes from countless international competitions, and has performed as a soloist or recitalist across the globe. He has performed in all the major European concert halls, in addition to those in Latin America and especially in Brazil, where he has lived since 2005. Following a highly successful career as a violinist, Baldini has embarked on new musical ventures as a conductor. He founded the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo (Osesp) Quartet, and has collaborated with internationally renowned artists such as Maria João Pires, Jean-Philippe Collard and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Baldini has been concertmaster of the Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna, the Orchestra del Teatro alla Scala di Milano and the Orchestra del Teatro 'Giuseppe Verdi' di Trieste, and since 2005 has been concertmaster of the Osesp. He has also acted as guest concertmaster of the Orquestra Sinfónica de Galicia. Between 2017 and 2020 he was music director of the Orquestra de Cámara de Valdivia in Chile, and as of 2022 he is principal conductor of the Symphonic Orchestra of Tatuí's Conservatory in Brazil. In October 2023 Emmanuele Baldini was appointed music director of the new Ñuble Symphonic Orchestra in Chile. www.emmanuelebaldini.com

Lucas Thomazinho



Photo: José Luiz de Souza

Acclaimed Brazilian pianist Lucas Thomazinho enjoys a remarkable career. He has performed as a soloist with prestigious orchestras across Brazil, including the São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra (Osesp), Orquestra Filarmônica de Minas Gerais, Orquestra Sinfônica da Bahia and the Orquestra Amazonas Filarmônica, and outside Brazil has appeared at Jordan Hall in the United States, the Conservatório de Música de Coimbra and Casa da Música in Portugal, Cité internationale universitaire de Paris, and Schloss Hallenburg in Germany. A laureate of numerous international piano competitions, he was awarded the Finalist Prize at the XIX Santander International Piano Competition, First Prize at the XVIII Santa Cecilia International Competition, and was a finalist of the 2016 PIANALE International Piano Academy & Competition. His composition *Prelúdio* for solo piano received the 2020 FUNARTE RespirArte Award. In 2023 he released an album of the complete piano works of Brazilian composer Dimitri Cervo (Azul Music). Thomazinho studied for a Bachelor's degree at the Universidade de São Paulo with Eduardo Monteiro, and a Master's degree at the New England Conservatory with Wha Kyung Byun and Alessio Bax.

Francisco Mignone was a leading figure in the Brazilian music scene of the 20th century, with a free-flowing style and gift for melody that instantly communicated with audiences. He was part of the first generation of modernist Brazilian composers that included Villa-Lobos and Guarnieri. Mignone's two early unnumbered sonatas emulate the French influence of Fauré and Debussy, but it was not until the 1960s that he returned to the genre. The *First* and *Second Sonatas* share a fragmented, experimental character that juxtapose varying forms of tonality and metre, while the *Third Sonata* features national rhythmic and melodic elements. These sonatas represent some of the most significant works for violin and piano to come from Brazil.



Francisco
MIGNONE
(1897–1986)

<p>Violin Sonata No. 1 (1964)* 16:56</p> <p>❶ I. Lento 5:08</p> <p>❷ II. Allegretto amabile 4:22</p> <p>❸ III. Moderato energico 7:26</p> <p>❹ Violin Sonata No. 2 (1966)* 14:15 Moderato – Intermezzo: Calmo e con ponderazione – Recitativo – Finale: Allegro</p> <p>Violin Sonata No. 3 (1966)* 16:59</p> <p>❺ I. Allegro tranquillo 6:39</p> <p>❻ II. Andante molto sostenuto 4:53</p> <p>❼ III. Rondó: Allegro scherzoso 5:27</p>	<p>Violin Sonata in A major (1919) 28:02</p> <p>❽ I. Allegro moderato 8:54</p> <p>❾ II. Andante 8:12</p> <p>❿ III. Allegro non troppo ma deciso 10:56</p> <p>⓫ Violin Sonata in G major (1916) 9:09 Allegro deciso</p>
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*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

Emmanuele Baldini, Violin • Lucas Thomazinho, Piano

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