



# The Hegemony of Europeanism in The Work of José Maurício Nunes Garcia

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## Abstract

It is proposed to study the work of the Brazilian black priest José Maurício Nunes Garcia (1767-1830), considered the greatest national composer of the Colonial Period, from the perspective of the hegemony of Europeanism - of European music that dominated all three phases, mainly Germanic and Italian. From this perspective, one can see how the structure of his work was developed, and with the methodology of Ethnomusicology, it could be considered that it is mostly oriented as a direct importation of Europeanism from the XVIII and XIX Centuries, and almost nothing has of Brazilian. This is partly due to his own humble and black origin - grandson of slaves - he had to completely subordinate himself to the will of his hierarchical superiors, both of the Church and of the Royal Court of Rio de Janeiro.

**Keywords:** Black father, European hegemony, Father José Maurício, ethnomusicology, Europeanism

## Introduction

This article aims to expose the results obtained in the doctoral research with UNESP – São Paulo State University, continuing the thought presented in my article published this year called “Father José Maurício Nunes Garcia: historical whitening?” (Vaccari, 2018). From this publication, it was possible to see how the clearing of black personalities in Brazil, such as the composer José Maurício Nunes Garcia, was deliberated, with the sole purpose of making him closer to the whites and giving him greater humanity and dignity - which was forbidden to the black slave.

From this hypothesis the following thesis was elaborated: José Mauricio

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(This article has been produced from the first author’s doctoral thesis).

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Nunes Garcia (1767-1830), a Brazilian colonial scholar, would have been whitened by history with the purpose of making it more European, which is, moreover, fully visible in his work, almost all based and influenced by the German composers Mozart and Haydn. This can be showed in my article *José Maurício Nunes Garcia and the Musical Mulatism: Historical Whitening?* (Vaccari, 2018), where I prove that the priest composer was, indeed, black, and not only mulatto – as the Brazilian musical historians tried to convince us through the centuries. This thesis is based on the fact that many scholars consider that their parents were both black (Figueiredo, 2012) and even Mattos, 1997 - How can a mulatto be the son of blacks, both mother and father? Besides, there are portraits from that period that show a much bleached José Maurício, denoting a certain tendency to make mulattos famous blacks. Recent portraits, however, present the darkest priest, with more black features, corroborating the thesis that he was, in life, blacker than he tried to impute the story to him.

It outlines the framework of the history of the black priest composer relying on the theory of ‘Eurocentrism’, or hegemony of Europe in the world of the nineteenth century, particularly in the Americas and Brazil. To this end, the work of the historian Sergio Buarque de Holanda is used, which in 1936, in *Roots of Brazil* (2016), defines the Brazilian land as an aberration - in the sense that it is a country with a tropical and multiethnic climate that adopted forms of culture, of civilization imported from a completely disparate nation, with habits alien to ours and devoid of meaning for our people and our culture. This complex and disproportionate hybridization in the tropics has resulted in the feeling that Brazilians, even today, feel themselves, on the national soil, as foreigners. It is necessary to point out that, even though apparently separated from its former colony, from the independence of Portugal in 1822, Brazil continued to suffer the overwhelming European hegemonic influence, less Iberian than French and English, in economic and cultural terms. In music, however, the predominance was alternated by the Germans, sometimes by the Italians, and the confluence of the two was what, culturally, structured the entire work of José Maurício Nunes Garcia. Contradicting, therefore, the myth of ‘racial democracy’ propagated by the sociologist Gilberto Freyre (2016), proposes a view in which multiracial Brazil is, in fact, a sectarian country in which, although predominant, the black race still suffers the hardships of inequality and human misery.

European hegemony in nineteenth-century Brazil was due to a number of factors, among them the scientism that claimed to be the highest white in the intellectual sphere - a concept that determined and perpetuated racism as something totally natural and even desirable - and the nationalism that sought these theories in practice. In addition to the European hegemony in relation to Brazil, there was also the great internal division of the country that took place in two great castes: the one of the masters and the one of the slaves.

Among them circulated some types who, with rare exceptions, achieved upward social mobility - but almost impossible a freed slave would ever wear cotton clothes. Belonging to the proprietary class presupposed, in addition to the racial element, the sharing of a set of values, styles and behaviors molded to the European conception of progress and civilization. It is within this framework that, for most of the nineteenth century, French and Italian operas, but especially the latter, were consumed obsessively by the elites who thus differed culturally from the free and slavery freed slaves who made up the majority of the population (Hazan, 2009: 25). Therefore, more than European hegemony, and allied to it, suffered the Brazilian nation of a preponderant financial elite that was identified rather with the European elite and culture. Dictating the rules of what should be the Art and Culture in general, this elite has dominated, over long centuries, the national thought regarding (good) customs, literature, music, theater, dance, politics and the press. Within this society, still slaver, anachronistic and colonial, was born José Maurício, in the capital of the Empire, black and grandson of slaves.

#### **José Maurício and the 'Defect of Color'**

José Maurício possessed all the attributes necessary for his ordination as a priest, except for the 'visible defect of color', as Mattos (1997) and Oliveira (2008) have put it. That is, they asserted that there was a white portion in him - which could exempt him from the color defect. The desire of many blacks and mulattoes to ascend socially through the priesthood is corroborated by a series of examples (Freyre, 2016), which reifies my thesis that the common man of color of colonial times had in his favor the following instruments of social promotion: the priesthood, and marriage with whites. Both, therefore, depended on the sphere of the Catholic Church to consolidate, which places it as practically the only mean of a liberated Negro to rise socially in the Empire. From the point of view of historical symbology, it is probable that men like José Maurício represented not just a personal social promotion, but also that of his whole family - who would have invested in some way and contributed to his ordination as a priest (Oliveira, 2008). This process, therefore, would constitute a representative allegory - in the field of macrocosm - of several families that would have been engaged in promoting such social mobility, forming in society as a whole a pressure that may have led to Abolition.

The so-called 'defect of color', in this way, was not an impediment to its ordination, and was even treated in a meritocratic way by some ancients like Viscount of Taunay. For Mattos (1997), the fact that José Maurício is a black man has a certain fascination - being almost fetishistic object of musicological veneration for its poor origin and color. The myth made and redone, over the centuries, of a humble black composer who 'asked for nothing' and was completely subordinate to his superiors, goes back to the historical binary idea that the Negro should be either extremely obedient or insubordinate (Hol-

anda, 2016). He, however, seems, in a way, to weave a prejudice by stigmatizing the Negro as the indolent and main cause of the notorious 'laziness of the tropics.' He goes so far as to say that "the very creation of the world would have been understood by them as a kind of abandonment, a divine languishing. How, in the meantime, can we assess which people are more apt to idleness, since it is the Portuguese colonizer also known to enjoy the drowsiness? The desired effect of an annulment of the 'defect' seems to have been the perpetuation of rigid Iberian Catholicism, established on Brazilian soil, not yet without a violent resistance that almost achieved its objectives. But how, of course, could transplanted Europeanism adapt itself to slavery monoculture, in which nothing but contradictory relations, completely foreign to those undertaken in Europe (Ribeiro, 1995) Mattos (1997), the most important biographer of the priest, can not specify, even after deep research in primary sources and documentation, the white ancestry of José Mauricio. This puts us once again the question already observed in my article (Vaccari, 2018): "would not he be a Negro who, for various historical reasons, and because of the 'defect' himself, had been whitened by the novelist romanesques of the nineteenth and twentieth century's?"

### **The Hegemony of Germanism in José Mauricio**

It should be noted that any layman who listens to the music of José Mauricio must be considered to be fully European, particularly German and Italian - is in a lesser proportion, that in more. This is how the structure of his work gradually develops: in the first phase, which covers the period from the end of the 18th century to the date of 1808, it is basically eighteenth century, that is, influenced by the French and Italian styles of the 1700s. From 1808, the date of the arrival of King Dom Joao VI to Brazil, which will be installed with his court in the capital Rio de Janeiro, the priest found himself compelled to assume another compositional style. From the harmonic simplicity and simple structuring of its previous phase new nuances arose, originating, to a large extent, from the Italian opera, but to the new way of making musical were amalgamated old European practices, like the polyphony and the fugue. In this way, together with the recitative and the arias of great vocal virtuosity, the exaggerated ornamentation of the Baroque remained in his work, constituting José Mauricio a composer who can include, in one piece, Baroque, Rococo, Classicism and Opera Pre-Romanticism and Rossinian Romanticism. He is, therefore, one of the Brazilian composers, along with Carlos Gomes, who most felt the European musical hegemony in his pieces. There is not even a characteristic in his style that could qualify him as a legitimate Brazilian - his plays are extremely Europeanized, and although they have certain idiosyncrasies, they can be considered true literal imitations of the Italian and German composers - see his Requiem of 1816, almost all inspired by Mozart's Requiem of 1791 that is practically a plagiarism. Nevertheless, its historical

value is undeniable - for the first time since the colonization gave rise to a Brazilian composer, whose mastery could be assimilated to that of a European like the Portuguese Marcos Portugal. The hegemony of Germanism was structured by his admiration for the Austrian geniuses Haydn and Mozart, and it should not be different - a black composer, grandson of slaves, born on Brazilian soil, could never have been a Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), a Brazilian nationalist composer, in the same way that the mulatto Carlos Gomes (1836-1896) has a work almost entirely under the hegemonic influence of nineteenth-century operatic Italianism.

This phenomenon could not have been different; apart from race, the Brazilian nation preceded the racial formation, resulting in a hybrid art (Andrade, 2006). It also corroborates the thought of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda in *Roots of Brazil*, in which the country has been linked, since its invasion and colonization, to a complete importation of foreign elements that, placed on this soil, sometimes do not make any sense, or entirely devoid of it (Holanda, 2016).

That is not enough; there is still a general tendency in all aspects of national culture to overestimate the European matrix of thinking, conception, and ideology, and in the field of music, performance, instrumentation, orchestration, colors, and aesthetics, roughly.

This submission was already set in the turbulent process of colonization, extending over virtually all centuries of Lusitanian domination in Brazil. Soon a scene was drawn in which Africans, newcomers here came across a culture totally different from their own, and they had two options: to participate in the cultural tangle - mixed of diverse cultures in a slow and irregularly formed syncretism - or to resist. But the second alternative was almost impossible. They had no resources, no financial resources, no human resources, no social resources - to resist such white oppression. They were left, therefore, with resignation, as race, as creed, as culture and society.

In this context, Fr. José Maurício fits perfectly. If there is still a strong current of exaltation of the achievements of the Europeans - the Germans and the Italians of the nineteenth century, especially - who will tell how their influence in the Brazilian-colonial period would not be overwhelming. The Master's work consists of three distinct phases, all marked by an accent of a different foreign nationality: the first, until 1808, when the Portuguese Royal Court arrived, is considered to be its eighteenth phase. At this stage, the production of the 1700's music, a more simplified writing, evolves into a style derived in part from that of the pre-classicism in vogue in Italy (Mattos, 1997).

At the same time, and contradictorily - like every Portuguese colony - there were places of cultural and heritage preservation in Africa, such as the churches of Nossa Senhora do Rosário and São Benedito dos Pretos. That is, once again, a hesitant pendulum between Europe and Africa, which has

marked our whole history. The second phase of the composer dates from about 1808 - when the Lusitanian royal family arrived in Brazil - until 1812, the most fertile and profitable period of all its production, when Royal Chapel Master. His style, which still retained some rudiments of eighteenth-century colonialism, now deepens and springs into solutions of extreme symphonism.

From 1812 the priest's situation worsened when he was removed from his duties as organist of the Royal Chapel - a position he had held since 1808 without receiving a penny more - due to his growing illnesses and intrigues with Lusitanian musicians, according to Mattos (1997). His mishaps with Marcos Portugal and his entourage are so well-known, and so constant they seem to have been the humiliations due to his skin and Brazilian origin, that is very widespread the phrase attributed to the priest: 'what I suffered of those people only God knows' (An anonymous biography, 1897: 4). From 1808 onwards he will produce less than he had been doing since the king's arrival, and Marcos Portugal's predominance as an official court composer will be accentuated more and more. His third phase, from 1812 to his death in 1830, signified a progressive simplification of writing, and a less abundant production, although there are two of his most expressive works: *the Office*, and *the Requiem*, or *Mass of the Dead*, both from 1816.

The great similarity with that *Requiem* with Mozart's one is known by all the investigators of the priest, and by any listener who knows more thoroughly the two works. Although they are constituted of undeniable similarities - beginning with the tonality, some themes, instrumentation and development of the work, when we analyze the *Introitus*, for example, of the two pieces, we realize

that of Mozart is a theme, a motif, a subject, accompanied in polyphonic writing in the other voices. In short, it is an escape, and in this he answers according to the contrapuntal formation of the author. Formation that José Mauricio did not have. This style is not yours, and is treated harmonically (Mattos, 1997: 122).

Taunay (1930a) even believes that the authorship of José Maurício's *Requiem* in D Minor of 1816 could be attributed to Mozart himself if it were an anonymous work found in Austria. By importing this music from abroad, and transcending it from a few national contours, adapting it to the structure available in Rio de Janeiro at the time, to its instruments and musicians, the work is presented as a simplified tribute to Mozart's *Requiem*.

It is not surprising that the *Requiem* of 1816 was all based on that of Mozart - it was certainly something to be expected of a poor and black musician of the 19th century that he tried to prove that he could, at the risk of losing his own identity, to transmute his work into a semblance of a great foreign work. However, in undertaking his *Mass of the Dead*, José Mauricio trans-

cended mere reproduction, as will be seen below. Considering that many of his plays, however much they are predominantly sacred, carry the conflict between the religious and the profane (Heitor, 1930), José Maurício can show to his time and posterity that the elements of both cultures can transubstantiate themselves into a third culture of syncretism. Thus are his *modinhas* songs, at the same time popular - because they are touched by the wire viola - and erudite, derived from his sacred writing, by the difficulty of vocal writing. And it is also, no doubt, his *Requiem* of 1816. By simplifying Mozart's writing, as in the well-known passage from the *Kirie Eleison*, he transforms the intricate counterpoint of the traditional European mass, by varying it in a more accessible style to the congregation of the churches of his time. By melding the Mozartian style with a more colloquial syllabic simplicity, but without forgetting the great consecrated forms, José Maurício performed a prodigy: he brought the classical German Mass to the multicultural colonial bosom of Rio de Janeiro. And the result is extraordinary - how he blends Viennese characteristics clearly with seemingly simple Brazilian colonial vocal polyphony. Obviously the similarities with Mozart's *Requiem* are what most draw attention to the first audition.

Starting with the tonality: D Minor. The first theme of José Maurício's *Requiem Introitus*, played by the cellos and basses, completed by the clarinet, already refers automatically to the theme that opens Mozart's, with a similar design on the clarinet in F (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The instrumentation of the priest in the Introit is slightly denser: there are divisions between two clarinets, and also between violas - Viola I and Viola II, and there are flutes, which is not the case with Mozart. The above-mentioned theme of the clarinet in the priest (bars 2 and 3) is very similar to that of Mozart (bars 2 to 5), and the similarity in bar 5 is even more evident. At this point, the design of José Maurício's clarinet seems to be the theme of this Mozart's 5th measure, only liquidated - the liquidation process consists of preserving some more important elements and eliminating less important ones, keeping the essential rhythmic-melodic elements making the (Schoenberg, 1990).

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of Mozart's Requiem. The instrument is labeled 'Corni di Bassetto in F' (M.). The tempo is 'Adagio'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is common time (C). The notation shows a melodic line starting with a half rest in the first measure, followed by a series of notes in the second and third measures, including a half note and a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamics include a piano (p) marking.

Figure 1 Mozart, 1791 [1791]: 1.

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of José Maurício's Requiem. The instrument is labeled 'Clarinetto 1 in B'. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The time signature is common time (C). The notation shows a melodic line starting with a half rest in the first measure, followed by a series of notes in the second and third measures, including a half note and a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamics include a piano (p) marking.

Figure 2 Garcia, 1816 [1816]: 1.

This *Requiem*, therefore, although it was composed of an acculturated Negro - who developed the technique of the dominant white culture and began to behave as if it were one of them - can symbolize the mass for the black deceased, who at the time were to complete three centuries of slavery in national territory. For Lázaro (2013) the black suffered three deaths, since his capture in Africa: an intellectual death, where the Negro was considered inferior in the matter of the mental faculties and of the logical and abstract thought: "The simple fact to walk by the same sidewalk was cause of anger for the residents of the city. It was not fair for them to walk the same place where a Negro, an ex-slave, a poor man and an illiterate walked. All this in one man [...]" (p. 37). The second death was the pain: to see your loved ones going through numerous difficulties, practically insurmountable due to the skin. The third and final death would be the literal.

The first death, the intellectual death, undermines all hope of black social advancement, and often leads to the next two. Deprived of education, education, intellectual tools such as rhetoric and academic knowledge, the second death falls on the black, the painful daily affliction of being despised and debased. The third can happen by joining the previous two, or it can be a mere shot in the middle of the night, by chance, or case-by-case.

José Maurício surpassed the first: even with an education full of gaps, he could be ordained priest, and no biographer of him affirms that he was deficient in the rational and scholarly field. Quite the contrary, there are reports and more accounts of his cognitive abilities, and the works that survived our time show a creative and timeless, transcendent character of colonial music itself, presenting innovations and compositional structure superior to those of his contemporaries. Thus Taunay tells us, in a biographical sketch of the priest who precedes the edition of his *Requiem* by Alberto Nepomuceno:

From that year of 1792, admitted in the best circles of the society of Rio de Janeiro, to take advantage of all the prejudices of then stingy color, [...] Jose Mauricio was much appreciated for the vastness and depth of his knowledge in various sciences and languages, mastery with which he played organ, harpsichord and then piano and improvised in them [...] (Garcia, 1897: 5).

Given the proper caveats of the romanticism of the time, which probably led Taunay to commit exaggerations of adjectivation, it is necessary to argue, meanwhile, that there is a consensus among musicologists as to the intellectual faculties of Jose Mauricio - he was, rather, a great musician and man of culture and literate, above average.

The second death, however, seems to have given him intense moments of anguish. We cannot say with conviction, but perhaps the song *modinha* "Kiss the hand that condemns me" was not only a whimper, but a real claim for social recognition. In the same text above Taunay reports that



however, increased the displeasures and struggles with the arrival, in Rio de Janeiro, of the celebrated Marcos Portugal in 1811 [...]. the innumerable intrigues and perverse gossip, all this became for José Maurício, not for a few years, the cause of ceaseless displeasures, vexations and undone that he knew how to endure (Garcia, 1897: 5-6).

The last death, in the end, would occur in 1830, sick and miserable, and he would have said, still according to Taunay himself: "Today [...] instead of the great orchestras that once caressed my ears, I only hear the sing of the crickets, my groans and the whining of the dogs, which upset me and sadden" (Garcia, 1897: 6). An anonymous biography gives the following - and no less romanesques - record of the last days of the priest-master: "The health of José Maurico (sic) was in a precarious state. He had weak memory; he did not recognize his own works, previously written - he cried when he remembered the past" (Biography, 1897: 6).

It is common to find in several documents the general acceptance that his death was due to palace intrigues. And his departure from musical activities and isolation were the natural and ultimate event. From a point of view, then, would not *the Requiem* of 1816, in a certain way, be a funeral mass to its own fate and misfortune, which would be realized in death in the penury, 14 years later?

### Conclusion

In Brazilian musical historiography, few are those that give the composer José Maurício the place that would be due to him - or idolize or despise him. His first biographers, Manuel de Araújo Porto Alegre (1806-1879), the Viscount of Taunay (1843-1899) and Luiz Heitor (1905-1992), have a deeply rooted notion of the priest, a composer that, in his view, suffered for his humble color and origin, and would have accepted his cruel social deprivation silently.

The most complete biographer of José Maurício, however, was Cleofe Person de Mattos (1913-2002), who has been considered the greatest scholar, collector and preserver of the collection of scores of him - which resulted in the publication of the thematic catalog, and the most complete biography of the composer - José Maurício Nunes Garcia - Biography. A fundamental source for the knowledge and understanding of the life and work of the musician Father, it has rarely been approached from the anthropological or social point of view. Anthropology, which constitutes one of the main methodological tools of ethnomusicology, is essential for the deepening of the research of the rise of a black musician in the Portuguese colony of Brazil.

None of the aboves dealt with the premise that José Maurício was a composer who acted under the overwhelming hegemonic aegis of the Europeanism of his time - mainly Germanism and Italianism - that was decisive

for the structuring of his entire work. Perhaps only Mario de Andrade (1893-1945) understood the priest in his totality - neither poor man nor genius and, although he was the greatest Brazilian colonial composer, he did not surpass the Italians of his time, which 'universally was little' (Andrade, 2006: 131).



Figure 3 Father José Mauricio (artist unknown). Shows the composer 'whitened' to approach the Caucasian European (Mattos, 1997, front cover).



Figure 4 Father José Maurício Nunes Garcia (Lanzelotti, date unknown). Portrait made by his son, José Maurício Nunes Garcia Jr., shows him more endowed with real human characteristics.

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