

Hopefully, this CD, with such strong performances by major concert artists as well as exceptional younger performers, will help elevate the visibility of Mamlok and her music.

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Padre José Maria Xavier, *Ofício de Trevas: Matinas de Sábado Santo, Matinas da Ressurreição*. Governo de Minas et al., MR02. 2005

1992 sparked an abundance of recordings of Latin American choral music, with CDs such as *Nueva España: Close Encounters in the New World* (Boston Camerata) and *Mexican Baroque* (Chanticleer), two especially well-known musical commemorations of the encounter between Europe and indigenous America. Many recordings have been made subsequently, some by Latin American artists such as Exaudi (Cuba) or the Coro de Cámara of the University of the Americas in Puebla (Mexico). As for Brazil, which celebrated its encounter in 2000 (Pedro Álvares Cabral sailed into Porto Seguro in 1500), an array of choral CDs are available. Composers such as Jose Mauricio Nunes Garcia, *mestre de capela* of Rio de Janeiro cathedral, and groups such as the Associação de Canto Coral or the Camerata de Rio Janeiro have been represented; an especially interesting CD, *Negro Spirituals au Brésil Baroque* by the French ensemble XVIII-21 Musique de Lumières, reflects Brazil's mixed-race heritage by featuring compositions by slaves freed either before or after emancipation in 1888.

Sacred choral music of what is now Brazil has been concentrated in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais. (The name means “General Mines” in Portuguese, so called because of the gold and diamond deposits discovered there.) Minas Gerais boasts the highest concentration of colonial baroque churches in the country, many with organs by local builders. Its church music is correspondingly rich. Prints of music by Haydn, Boccherini, early Beethoven, and others testify to a wealth of performance materials, as do the works of several composers, most of whom will likely be unfamiliar to listeners in the United States: Marcos Coelho Netto (1746–1806), Ignacio Parreiras Neves (ca. 1730–ca. 1793), and Manoel Dias de Oliveira (ca. 1735–1813). In the 1940s, the German-born Uruguayan musicologist Curt Francisco Lange laid the groundwork for research on Minas Gerais and its church music. Subsequent scholarship, as well as performance, has tended to focus on the eighteenth century.

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of this music. Mamlok's *Panta Rhei* (1981) for piano trio is included (pp. 140–45), along with comments throughout the book about her individualistic approach to twelve-tone composition.

Just as scholars in the United States are now exploring the nineteenth-century music of their country, so, too, are Latin American musicologists and performers investigating this less-familiar era. The CD reviewed here, by the Orquestra e Coro dos Inconfidentes and directed by Marcelo Ramos, is therefore of particular interest. It features music by Father José Maria Xavier, whose long career spanned much of the nineteenth century. Born in 1819, Xavier seems to have spent his entire life in Minas Gerais. He began his musical training as a choirboy, and by the time he entered seminary in 1845, he had studied piano, theory, violin, and clarinet, along with general subjects. During his career (he died in 1887), he composed several sacred choral compositions, including a “Veni Creator Spiritus” and an “Assumpta Est.” Xavier adapted to local conditions. Sometimes he wrote with certain performers in mind, and, because there was no oboist in Mariana, the city in which he lived, he relied on flute, clarinet, and trumpet for melodic lines in the higher ranges, as is the case with this recording of Holy Week and Easter music.

Tenebrae (*Trevas* in Portuguese) is the name often given to the Offices of Matins and Lauds as performed on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday before Easter. Tenebrae music traditionally marks the successive extinction of fourteen candles, which represent the eleven apostles and the three Marys; a fifteenth candle, representing Christ, remains illuminated while the music and readings proceed in darkness. In Minas Gerais, following Portuguese custom, the fifteenth candle is placed higher than the others on the candelabra and is known as the *galo das trevas* (the Tenebrae rooster), the crowing of which informed the apostle Peter that he had denied Christ three times. Another Portuguese tradition dictates that when the office is concluded, congregants slam shut their prayer books and stamp their feet on the floor by the light of that single candle, symbolizing the earthquake that Christ’s death precipitated.

Xavier’s Holy Saturday matins anticipates the imminent joy of the resurrection while reminding listeners of betrayal and death. A brief and peaceful antiphon in E-flat major celebrates the peace of sleep with soaring woodwind and brass countermelodies to the homorhythmic choral writing; occasional chromatic chords flavor an otherwise diatonic harmonic framework. Nine responsories follow, each of which Xavier invests with considerable variety. The first, “Sicut ovis,” which starts in F minor, quickly bursts into the parallel major, initiating one of many modal shifts that enliven the work. The hopeful phrase “Ut vivificaret populum suum” (to give life to his people) receives an almost Rossinian treatment in its woodwind embellishments to the soprano line and the immediate and literal repetition of melodic fragments. Plunging the listener back into darkness is the “O vos omnes” (responsory no. 5), the tremolo strings and minor mode of which constitute one of the work’s many *Sturm und Drang* moments. Launching the Resurrection matins is the “Surrexit Dominus vere,” which opens with a rising D-major triad culminating in a unison passage to acclaim the joyful tidings. Two responsories, a lauds for the Paschal season, and a final antiphon follow. (A bonus track, a setting of a Holy Saturday reading for bass solo and a delightfully “pointed” flute obligato, is tacked on at the end.) Again, a variety of moods prevails. In the “Surrexit Dominus vere,” for example, the “Alleluia” is accompanied by pizzicato strings and antiphonal statements of the single word “Alleluia” fired puckishly back and forth among the

sections of the choir. All in all, the work is admirable for its diversity of expression and accessibility.

Occasionally the soloists of the *Coro dos Inconfidentes* are less than secure. Purists would probably question the freedom of certain passages (i.e., the string portamento just before the bass solo “Attendite universis”), but I welcome such exuberance. One could also quibble with a few of the translations. “Jerusalem, rise and undress thyself from happiness” (Jerusalem surge, et exuete vestibus jucunditatis) will likely elicit a smile from a native speaker of English. These reservations are cavils, however. Ramos, an important figure in the musical life of Minas Gerais today, offers listeners a solid conception of work that allows us a glimpse into Catholic church music of the Americas that we are just beginning to appreciate in the United States. As post-secondary music programs increasingly incorporate Latin American music into their curricula, we can hope that many more such recordings will issue from Brazil and other countries with similarly bounteous choral traditions.

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Anthony Davis, *Amistad*. New World Records 80627–2, 2008.

This live recording of Davis’s two-act opera, based on the infamous rebellion on the slave ship *La Amistad* in 1839 and setting a libretto by the composer’s cousin Thulani Davis, was made during two of the premier performances mounted in November/December 1997 at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, which commissioned the work. Conducted by Dennis Russell Davies and directed for the stage by George C. Wolfe, the cast included Thomas Young (The Trickster God), Mark S. Doss (Cinque), Stephen West (John Quincy Adams), Florence Quivar (Goddess of the Waters), and Mark Baker (Navigator). The present release includes a handsomely produced eighty-three-page booklet containing stimulating introductory articles by George E. Lewis and Anthony Davis, a full set of performers’ biographies, a plot synopsis, helpful historical and cultural notes (by the librettist) that describe the principal dramatic roles, and the full libretto of the opera, liberally illustrated with production stills.

The opera as performed in 1997 differs significantly from a leaner and more compact version of the score subsequently prepared by Davis for its in-the-round revival at the Spoleto Festival USA in 2008 (on which occasion it was performed, with great historical irony, in the former slaving port of Charleston, South Carolina), for which the composer made a number of cuts, reorganizations, and a major reduction of the instrumental forces. Critical responses to the revised version were somewhat warmer than those that had attended the premier staging, and the present recording of the latter at times provides a reminder of the occasional longueurs