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# International Trumpet Guild® Journal

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## ***THE TRUMPET CONCERTO*** **BY JOSÉ GUERRA VICENTE: A BRAZILIAN GEM** **BY HEINZ KARL SCHWEBEL**

January 2012 • Page 48

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# THE TRUMPET CONCERTO

## BY JOSÉ GUERRA VICENTE: A BRAZILIAN GEM

BY HEINZ KARL SCHWEBEL

Very little is known about Brazilian trumpet music beyond the country's borders. A number of reasons can be given for that, ranging from an almost total lack of recordings and publications, to the predominance of the foreign repertoire even among Brazilian trumpet players. To this day, none of the Brazilian concertos for trumpet and orchestra have been recorded, and only a few pieces have been properly published. The majority of the compositions have copies of manuscripts circulating all over the country.

Nonetheless, Brazilian composers have written and continue to write profusely for the trumpet. Our repertoire is rich, interesting, and growing with pieces ranging from folklore-derived compositions to twelve-tone sonatas, African-influenced pieces, and nationalistic or pure avant-garde compositions.

Some of the most famous Brazilian composers who wrote at least one piece for trumpet are Camargo Guarnieri, Francisco Mignone, Claudio Santoro, Osvaldo Lacerda, Ernani Aguiar, Ricardo Tacuchian, José Siqueira, José Ursicino Duda da Silva, José Alberto Kaplan, Fernando Cerqueira, Wellington Gomes, and Paulo Costa Lima, among others. All of these composers wrote very interesting pieces for trumpet, most of them short and single movement works, although a few sonatas can be found in their catalogues. Unfortunately, the most famous of all Brazilian composers, Heitor Villa-Lobos, never wrote a solo piece for trumpet and none of the above-mentioned composers ever wrote a full-length concerto for this instrument and orchestra either. It was for a much lesser known composer to write the great Brazilian concerto for trumpet. That is the concerto by José Guerra Vicente (Figure 1).

This concerto is the warhorse piece in our literature, equivalent to what the Tomasi or Jolivet concerti are to the French repertoire or Arutunian or Goedicke might be for the Russian trumpet literature. Big in dimension, clear in form, and very pleasant to the ear, this concerto is destined to become a favorite of trum-

peters all over the world, that is, if we manage to make it known! As Marco Xavier considers on his master's dissertation:

The study of this composition is important not only for its quality or its relevance to the trumpet's repertoire, but also because of the necessity and opportunity of divulging it in a broader plan, conquering for it its due place in Brazilian music. (Xavier, 2008)

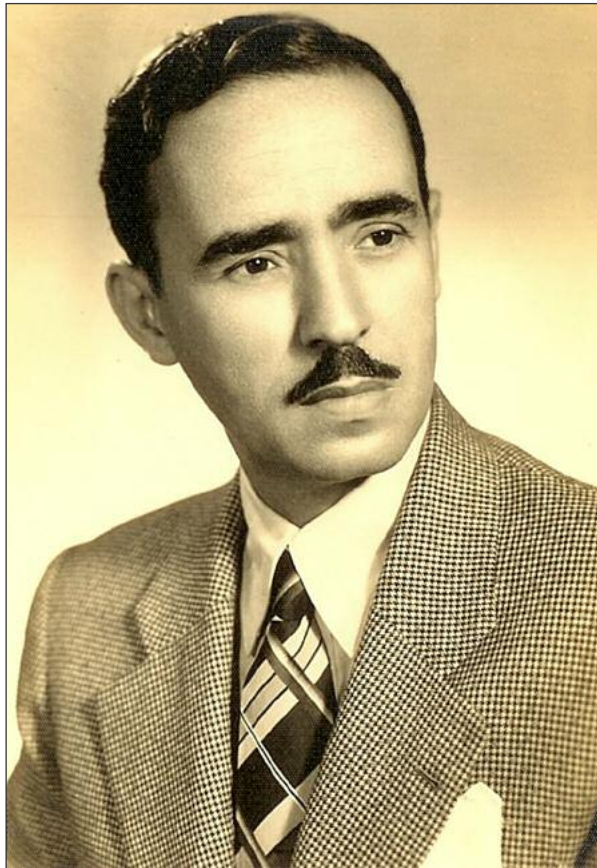


Figure 1. José Guerra Vicente

(1952 – 1971) and “free-style with Brazilianisms” as self-defined in his third and last composing period.

His compositions include three symphonies, a concerto for cello, many pieces for chamber orchestra, numerous smaller instrumental works, vocal and chamber pieces and, of course, the trumpet concerto.

Guerra Vicente had in his family the main interpreters of his music. His wife, Giselda Baptista Guerra, an accomplished violinist and singer, premiered his *Nocturne* for violin and piano when they were still unmarried, and later, as Mrs. Vicente, she went on to pre-

miere every vocal composition the composer ever wrote. His son, Antonio Guerra Vicente, (known throughout Brazil as Guerrinha, meaning “Little Guerra”) was the main interpreter

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of his compositions for the cello, the instrument that benefited the most from the composer's work. And his grandson, Augusto da Silva Guerra Vicente, also a professional cellist, presented his master's dissertation making use of the *Trio* for cellos by his grandfather as a theme.

As the President of the Brazilian Academy of Music, Ricardo Tacuchian, writes in the preface of Elizete Higino's book *José Guerra Vicente: o compositor e sua obra* (*José Guerra Vicente: the Composer and his work*, published by the Brazilian Music Academy in 2006) the following:

Children are the continuation of their parents.

However, in the case of Guerrinha and Augusto, they are much more than that: they are august warriors. Through their filial love, their musical artistry, and their documented zeal, they have kept their father and grandfather's legacy alive—for the privilege of those who knew him and for the delight of discovery for those who were not so fortunate (Higino, 2006)

Guerra Vicente was a member of the International Society of Contemporary Music and a founder of its Brazilian chapter. However, as a great admirer of Wagner's music (he thought *Tristan and Isolde* was the highest musical expression a human being could possibly achieve), and having in Wagner an example of how to prepare for composing (exhaustive preparation in field of harmony and counterpoint), he was very critical of some compositional tendencies he felt were hurting the Brazilian musical scene. He said of some composers of his time: "Most of them (there are honorable exceptions) hide their lack of preparation with extravagant claims to names and resources. They want to show off!" (Ibid.)

As a composer, he distinguished himself in 1960 as a winner of the competition organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture to commemorate the recently built capital city of Brazil. His *Sinfonia Brasília* was awarded first prize. In 1968 he was the sole prizewinner in the *National Composing Competition* with his *Symphonic Overture*. And in 1974, his work *Miragem* was awarded with *Honors* in the city of Cologne in Germany.

As a cellist, Vicente had among his most significant experiences having played the world premiere of Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 1*, with the composer as conductor, on November 13, 1938.

José Guerra Vicente died in 1976 at the age of seventy years old, in the city of Vassouras in Rio de Janeiro, due to respiratory problems aggravated by asthma.

### The Concerto

The trumpet concerto by Jose Guerra Vicente, written in 1963, belongs to his nationalistic period, with a noticeable influence of Villa-Lobos's music. Although it does not incorporate many strong characteristics of Brazilian music of the time such as the use of folk themes, Brazilian popular rhythms, or the very prominent use of percussion instruments (only timpani are used in the piece) it does feature some Brazilian popular music characteristics such as the use of glissandos, displaced accents, a song-like second movement, and a strong use of syncopation. The concerto occupies a unique place in the Brazilian trumpet literature, not only for its intrinsic musical qualities but also for the fact that, at least to the best of this author's knowledge, it was the first Brazilian trumpet concerto ever written.

Guerra Vicente came to the idea of writing a trumpet concerto quite casually, as he himself states: "As I heard on National Radio those masters playing their trumpets and trombones with great liberty, I went on to take notes of those improvised effects until the idea of writing a trumpet concerto with orchestra came to me" (Ibid.)

Vicente incorporates in the concerto his most prominent characteristics as a composer, as indicated by Higino in

her book: he never abandoned tonality, being fond of polytonalism; he used a rich orchestration, with a sophisticated and bold harmony, and used his contrapuntal expertise to create imitations in all intervals.

Lasting about 22 minutes, the concerto is quite demanding technically and musically, calling for endurance, dexterity and, above all, a relative sense of swing, in order to give the piece the right character. Its tessitura, however, should not pose a problem, ranging from low B-flat to high B-flat concert only (Figure 2), hence being accessible to the advanced college student.

The first movement *Allegro Vigoroso* in slightly modified sonata form starts out traditionally with an orchestral introduction of the theme and the trumpet coming in on measure 24 to restate it (Figure 3). Right at that first theme, Vicente uses displaced accents in order to create the swinging character

"The concerto occupies a unique place in the Brazilian trumpet literature..."



Figure 2



Figure 3

*Andante Calmo (nostálgico)*

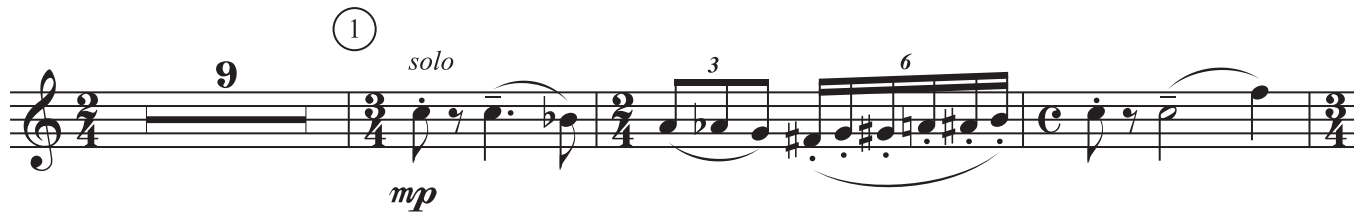


Figure 4

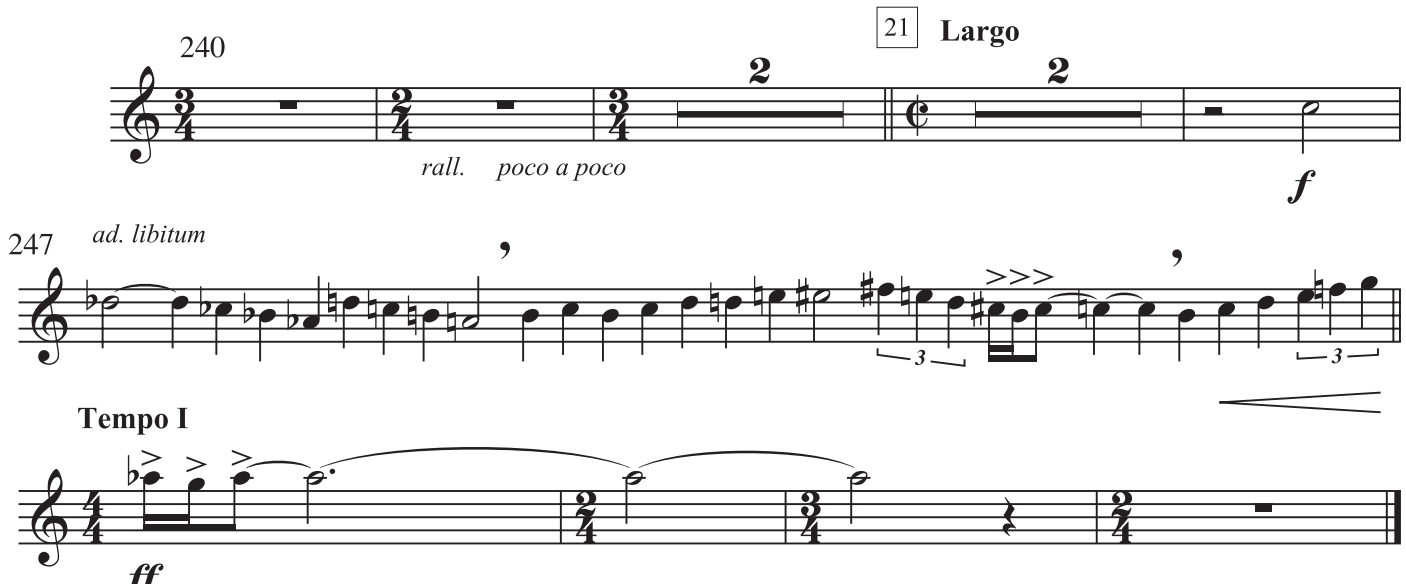


Figure 5

of the movement. Those should be thought of more as jazz accents than as one would normally approach them in classical music. A jazz feel is created through the constant use of *glissandi*.

The second movement of the concerto, *Andante Calmo, Nostálgico*, is in ABA song form, with many chances for the trumpeter to display his emotions through expressive playing. The many chromatic scales he uses give this movement a kind of sensuality and tension seldom explored in Brazilian literature for the trumpet (Figure 4).

The third movement of the concerto is the only one in which the trumpet starts out playing by itself and stating the theme of the *Allegro* with all its dislocated accents adding to the syncopated feel omnipresent in the piece.

The constant use of effects such as trills and glissandos add to the drama in this final movement. A small cadenza written out by the composer is presented before the movement reaches its final peak (Figure 5).

It is interesting to notice that Vicente used the same rhythmic-structured cell for all three movements, which gives a sense of unity to the piece.

The concerto is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets in B-flat, two bassoons, two horns in F, timpani and strings.

### The Premiere

I mentioned in the beginning of this article that one of the reasons Brazilian trumpet literature is not well known abroad is that, even among Brazilian trumpeters, the programming of

international standard repertoire instead of lesser-known Brazilian pieces is common practice. There still are far more frequent performances of the Haydn, Hummel, or Arutunian concertos than of Brazilian examples of the genre.

This might explain why it took 43 years for the concerto to be premiered.

In 2003, when I was a guest artist at the Brasília International Summer Music Festival, I was approached by Antonio Guerra Vicente, the composer's son, who asked me if I would like to play his father's trumpet concerto. I did not know of the piece at all at that time but was very open to the possibility. Guerrinha told me he was working on an edition of the original manuscript and asked me which trumpet I would use for the eventual performance. At the time, I told him to edit the part for the C trumpet.

It wasn't until 2006, when the final edition was ready, that I had a chance to finally program the piece with the Bahia Symphony Orchestra where I occupy the principal trumpet chair. On June 27, 2006, the concerto was finally premiered with orchestra, with a second performance on the following day. Unfortunately, it was far too late for the composer to hear his music played, but his son, Guerrinha, made the trip from Brasília to Salvador to represent him and hear me play it.

Although the concerto was originally written for the B-flat trumpet and edited by the composer's son for the C trumpet at this author's request, it was premiered on the E-flat trumpet. The use of this instrument is not at all mandatory or even nec-

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essary but it adds to the comfort of the soloist allowing for even more attention being given to musical rather than technical aspects of the piece. Also, the author believes, if one has a strong sense of how he wants to sound, the instrument one uses will not have a detrimental effect on achieving that sound.

The familiarity that came from working on the piece for its premiere led to my suggestion to one of my master's students at the Federal University of Bahia to write his thesis about the concerto. Marco Xavier, principal trumpet of the Orquestra Sinfônica do Paraná, accepted that suggestion and had his work *A Historic, Technical and Interpretative Study of the Trumpet Concerto by José Guerra Vicente* approved in 2008. Some of the figures presented in this article were taken from that dissertation, with the permission of its author.

### Accessing the Concerto

That the music of Vicente is being more frequently played and better known in Brazil is thanks to the tireless dedication and work of his son, Antonio Guerra Vicente. An excellent musician himself, Guerrinha painstakingly edited the trumpet concerto, and was paramount in helping Elizete Higino write her book.

He has also edited many more of his father's compositions and has recorded a number of them. As one more way to help divulge his father's musical legacy, Guerrinha has given permission for the trumpet part of the concerto to be made available to all ITG members as a complement to this article. The full orchestral material for the concerto is available only through Mr. Vicente's son who can be contacted by Email ([guerrent@terra.com.br](mailto:guerrent@terra.com.br)).

The solo part, however, is available from the *ITG Web Site* (<http://www.trumpetguild.org/journal/journal.htm>). It is this author's hope that many ITG members will indeed print it and enjoy the uniqueness of this old new addition to our repertoire.

*About the author:* Since 2000, Heinz Karl Schwebel has served as principal trumpet of the Bahia Symphony Orchestra (Brazil). He was previously engaged in the same orchestra as assistant first trumpet. Schwebel is also professor of trumpet at the Bahia Federal University. He holds degrees from the Federal University of Bahia (BM), the New England Conservatory of Music (MM), and the Catholic University of America (DMA). Schwebel was a student of Horst Schwebel in Brazil and Charles Schlueter in America. During a brief period in Germany he was a student of Adolf Weresch and took lessons from Reinhold Friedrich at the Musikhochschule in Karlsruhe.

Heinz has played as principal trumpet under Zubin Mehta in the Jerusalem International Symphony Orchestra and under such conductors as Aldo Cecatto, Stanislaw Skrowaczewsky, Marek Janovsky and many others in different orchestras in Brazil and abroad.

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