

Spanish Guitarists in Nineteenth-Century São Paulo

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IN THE HISTORY OF THE GUITAR IN BRAZIL, the nineteenth century still awaits a fuller exploration. Apart from studies of Villa-Lobos (1887–1959), there is little scholarship dedicated to guitar works written before the mid-twentieth century, whether by native-born composers or composers who were born abroad and immigrated to Brazil.¹ If this is the case for Brazil’s former capital of Rio de Janeiro — where politics, geography, and tradition favored the development and documentation of artistic practices — it is even more so for other regions. In recent years, however, information about the nineteenth-century guitar scene in Brazil has become more accessible, thanks to the digitization of historical newspapers and magazines. These resources have brought to light musical practices previously believed to have emerged only in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the last two decades, moreover, some important private collections — such as the *Coleção Ronoel Simões*² — have become publicly available, making it possible for researchers to trace sources mentioned in nineteenth-century magazines. Collections such as this will inevitably be digitized, catalogued, and made available online, and researchers into the history of the Brazilian guitar will gain more tools to reconstruct this scattered mosaic of

1 Humberto Amorim, “Idiomatismos na produção para violão de Melchior Cortez (1882–1947),” *Debates: Cadernos do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Música* (Rio de Janeiro), no. 21 (November 2018): 43.

2 Ronoel Simões (1919–2010) was a guitarist, researcher, and collector from the State of São Paulo. His collection, gathered over a sixty-year period and acquired by the São Paulo City Council in 2010, is one of the largest collections of scores and recordings of plucked guitar in the world. In 2016, the Discoteca Oneyda Alvarenga, located at the Centro Cultural São Paulo, made his collection available to the public. Among its items, there are recordings, pictures, newspaper clippings, letters, manuscripts, and edited scores. Both major and minor guitarists are represented, for Simões did not pass judgment on the items, but collected anything related to the plucked guitar. Because of that, his collection displays a comprehensive view of the instrument, not one restricted to the canon. Therefore, the collection is an invaluable source for a reconstruction of the guitar practices, repertoires, and trajectories in several periods and locations.

sounds. A new era of guitar scholarship has arrived and with it an opportunity to reconstruct the instrument's history.

There is already a significant body of research on guitar activity in São Paulo that predates the appearance of these digital resources, thanks to the work of several scholars. Giacomo Bartoloni's 1995 survey of specialized newspapers and magazines includes a list of significant works from the period in question.³ Bartoloni's later doctoral research focuses on the social history of the instrument in São Paulo, examining the ways in which piano literature influenced compositional techniques for the guitar and vice versa.⁴ Of equal note is Gilson Antunes's 2002 master's thesis on the guitarist Américo Jacomino, or "Canhoto" (Lefty), as he is better known.⁵ More than a study of a single figure, Antunes's work constitutes a major reference for the guitar scene in the city of São Paulo in the first two decades of the twentieth century, including as it does data on the repertoire circulating in the city and sound recordings being made at the time. In the early 1990s, Paulo Castagna, Gilson Antunes, and Eduardo Fleury conducted a highly influential study of the guitar in São Paulo.⁶ Unpublished, but widely available due to the generosity of its authors, this comprehensive three-volume work focuses on guitar-related news articles from the first three decades of the twentieth century, laying the foundations for subsequent research. Lastly, the contributions of Maurício Orosco and of Paola Picherzky deserve mention for the light they shed on the contributions of guitarists Isaías Sávio and Armando Neves, respectively.⁷ All these studies underpin the present inquiry and help contextualize emerging data on nineteenth-century Brazilian guitar culture.

Newly uncovered primary sources—for example, Humberto Amorim's 2019 discovery of the earliest known Brazilian guitar periodical,⁸ dating from 1857—tell us that the guitar was used in soirées and in public performances during this time, and that much of its repertoire consisted of transcriptions of opera extracts and stylized ballroom dances (waltzes, mazurkas, and gavottes), music that was also widely performed on other instruments such as the flute, violin, and piano. Hence, the guitar was a familiar sight among the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Indeed, the evidence places the guitar (in one form or another) in a range of cultural settings, pointing to a diffusion of the instrument throughout nineteenth-century Brazilian society. It becomes clear that playing the guitar from notated music, rather than by

- 3 Giacomo Bartoloni, "O violão na cidade de São Paulo no período de 1900 a 1950" (master's thesis), São Paulo State University, 1995.
- 4 Giacomo Bartoloni, "Violão: A imagem que fez escola; São Paulo 1900–1960" (doctoral diss., São Paulo State University, 2000).
- 5 Gilson Uehara Antunes, "Américo Jacomino Canhoto e o desenvolvimento da arte solística do violão em São Paulo" (master's thesis, University of São Paulo, 2002).
- 6 Paulo Castagna, Gilson Antunes, and Eduardo Fleury, "O violão em São Paulo (1900–1930)" (unpublished, 1993).
- 7 Maurício T. S. Orosco, "O compositor Isaías Sávio e sua obra para violão" (master's thesis, University of São Paulo, 2001); Andrea Paula Picherzky, "Armando Neves: Choro no violão paulista" (master's thesis, São Paulo State University, 2004).
- 8 *O Guitarrista Moderno*, 1857. Amorim has also discovered several nineteenth-century compositions for guitar by guitarists such as Alfredo Imenes and Melchior Cortez.

ear alone, was not unheard of at the time, as was previously believed. Although Brazil did not (and still does not) have a consolidated market of printed music for guitar, the number of manuscripts recently found in collections proves that guitar works circulated widely. In the case of São Paulo, the main focus of this article, evidence indicates that the guitar was already making headway as a concert instrument as early as the nineteenth century.

The aim of the present article is to deepen our understanding of the guitar culture of nineteenth-century São Paulo by examining the activities of two Spanish guitarists who arrived on the scene during this period: José Martínez Toboso and Praxedes Gil-Orozco. Reports of guitar performances in the São Paulo press date from as early as the mid-nineteenth century; but these two Valencians, performing in duo, seem to have been the first to play more formal concerts in the city. Composer Alexandre Levy reported the guitarists' 1890 performance in two reviews published in the newspaper *Correio Paulistano*. Most likely, these were the first reviews of guitar concerts published in the São Paulo press. Gil-Orozco went on to live in the city for the next seventeen years (1890–1907) and became a fundamental presence in the guitar scene in São Paulo — his activities will thus be further examined below.

1. José Martínez Toboso and Praxedes Gil-Orozco

José Martínez Toboso was one of a group of guitarists directly connected to Julián Arcas (1832–82),⁹ an Andalusian composer and teacher who influenced Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909) and Antonio Torres (1817–92).¹⁰ A few details of Toboso's career paint the picture of his role within this group:¹¹ In 1876, he played a concert dedicated to Arcas's works in Seville. In that same year, Antonio Torres built him the

9 Arcas was a student of José Asencio, who in turn was a student of the legendary Spanish guitarist Dionisio Aguado (1784–1849). Aguado's nineteenth-century method was often used in Brazil, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. It is believed that Antonio Torres enlarged the body of the guitar at Arcas's suggestion. See Domingo Prat, *Diccionario de guitarristas* (Buenos Aires: Romero y Fernández, 1934), 33.

10 With the development of the piano and concert halls in the Romantic period, the guitar found itself relegated to a secondary role, mainly because of its quiet sound. The Spanish guitarist and composer Francisco de Assis Tárrega Eixea was a key figure in the guitar revival of the twentieth century and is considered one of the founders of the modern guitar. Even though Tárrega left no published method, his numerous students have spread his principles throughout the world, several of them having written methods based on his teachings, which would come to be called the "School of Tárrega." Tárrega transcribed piano works for the guitar, composed for the instrument, performed in recitals, taught, and advocated for the modern guitar, whose most emblematic maker was the Spanish luthier Antonio Torres. The *modern guitar* has a larger body than the *romantic guitar* and an internal system using fan bracing that allowed for a better sound projection, making it possible for the instrument to be performed in larger halls.

11 Martínez Toboso's biographical information is gathered from the following sources: Francisco Herrera, *Enciclopedia de la guitarra*, rev. ed. (Valencia: Editorial Piles, 2011); Norberto Torres, "La guitarra en la prensa de Sevilla y Almería en las dos épocas de Julián Arcas y Antonio de Torres," *Sinfonía Virtual: Revista de Música Clásica y Reflexión Musical*, no. 36 (2019): 1–43.

eleven-string guitar that he would play for the rest of life. In 1878, Toboso performed in a duo with another student of Arcas, Juan Parga, and in 1882 he toured Spain and Portugal with a fifteen-year-old student of Parga named José Rojo.¹² Two years later, he partnered with another one of Arcas's students, Luis Soria (1851–1935). Through such activities, Toboso took his place among those instrumentalists, guitar makers, and teachers who were interested in restoring the guitar to its former prominence through the expansion of its sonority, repertoire, and technique.

It was at the beginning of 1888 that Toboso began performing with Praxedes Gil-Orozco (1857–1916): as a duo they presented a number of concerts throughout Latin America. The pair began their tour of Latin America in 1889, visiting such countries as Venezuela, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago.¹³ By the middle of 1889 they had reached Brazil: periodicals of the time record the duo's presence in Rio de Janeiro, Pará, Maranhão, Fortaleza, Recife, São Paulo, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia, and Minas Gerais. In São Paulo, they performed two concert series, the first in June 1890 (as reported by Alexander Levy: see below), and the second in November and December of that same year,¹⁴ including a trio performance in November with the young Italian violinist Giulietta Dionesi.¹⁵

In late 1890, the duo parted ways: Gil-Orozco decided to remain permanently in São Paulo,¹⁶ and Toboso left for Argentina to continue a solo tour of the American continent, returning to Spain soon afterward. This would not be their final collaboration, however; between 1899 and 1901, Gil-Orozco returned to Spain on family

12 Prat, *Diccionario*, 196.

13 Luis Gil-Orozco Roda, *El guitarrista Gil-Orozco: El artista, el hombre y su tiempo* (Requena: self-published, 2011), 81–93.

14 Alexandre Levy also wrote about this concert. He discussed the performance of each member of the trio, their repertoire, and the participation of a pianist, Miss Imbert, whose choice of repertoire did not altogether please him. *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo) 37, no. 10,260 (November 18, 1890): 1.

15 Dionesi performed at the age of eleven at the Teatro Sant'Anna, in Rio de Janeiro (1889). It was immediately after Dionesi's concert, as he was leaving the theater, that Dom Pedro II, Brazil's second and last emperor, was attacked by a radical republican—four months before the proclamation of the Republic in Brazil. Dionesi was born in Livorno, Italy (ca. 1877), and died in Ouro Preto, Brazil (1911). The Brazilian poet João da Cruz e Sousa dedicated the poem "Giulietta Dionesi" to her (it was published in the posthumous book *O derradeiro*). Karla Armani Medeiros has written about Dionesi on her blog: see <http://karlaarmani.blogspot.com/2019/01/giulietta-dionesi-jovem-violinista.html>.

16 Sources date Gil-Orozco's arrival in the city between 1901 and 1903, mostly based on the accounts of Isaías Sávio and Ronoel Simões in the magazine *Violão e Mestres* (published by the guitar factory Tranquilo Giannini between 1964 and 1967). As we have seen, Gil-Orozco's arrival, which on the evidence adduced in this article can be dated to 1901, was actually a return. Nevertheless, *Violão e Mestres* remains a vital document of the guitar scene in the 1960s, as well as the history of the guitar in general. The instrument's local history must have reached Sávio and Simões by oral accounts, given that the former arrived in Brazil only in the 1930s and the latter became involved with the guitar in the 1940s. The relation between history and memory in the development of historiography is a theoretical challenge that must be faced constantly. For further information, see Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

matters,¹⁷ and a concert program reveals that the pair performed alongside Francisco Tárrega in two concerts in Gil-Orozco's birthplace of Requena, Valencia, in late November 1900 (**figure 1**).

Toboso made a second trip to Brazil in 1904, when he performed in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as a member of the Terceto Espanhol (Spanish Trio), together with the bandurria player Primo Campos and the lutenist Daniel Avillar. A São Paulo newspaper records the occasion, testifying to the acclaim Toboso had won on his earlier tour: "Unfortunately, the notable guitarist, who achieved high prestige before going away, is currently, due to illness, limited to accompanying [his two colleagues]."¹⁸ It is clear that the reputation Toboso achieved with his first tour still echoed in the São Paulo press of the early twentieth century. This late phase of Toboso's career saw the publication of his only known composition, *Viva la Pilarica: Gran jota aragonesa*, in Madrid in 1911.

Weighing the evidence presented in this timeline, I suspect that Toboso and Gil-Orozco were the first guitarists to bring the principles of the School of Tárrega to São Paulo, nearly three decades before the arrival of Josefina Robledo.¹⁹ And they were well-equipped to do so: Their proximity to the social circle around Julián Arcas (Parga, Rojo, Soria, and others) and to Antonio Torres and Francisco Tárrega suggests that they were immersed in the development of the modern guitar and its associated techniques.

II. Gil-Orozco and the Guitar in São Paulo

Let us return to Gil-Orozco in the period immediately following his 1890 split from Toboso. We now find him immersed in São Paulo's Spanish immigrant community. In 1892, Gil-Orozco cofounded the daily newspaper *La Iberia*, a periodical in Spanish directed to the community of immigrants living in the city. He was a founding member of two São Paulo associations dedicated to the welfare of Spanish immigrants, Orfeón español in 1896 and the Sociedade espanhola de socorros mútuos São Paulo in 1898.²⁰ He also became involved in collecting funds for the Spanish-American War

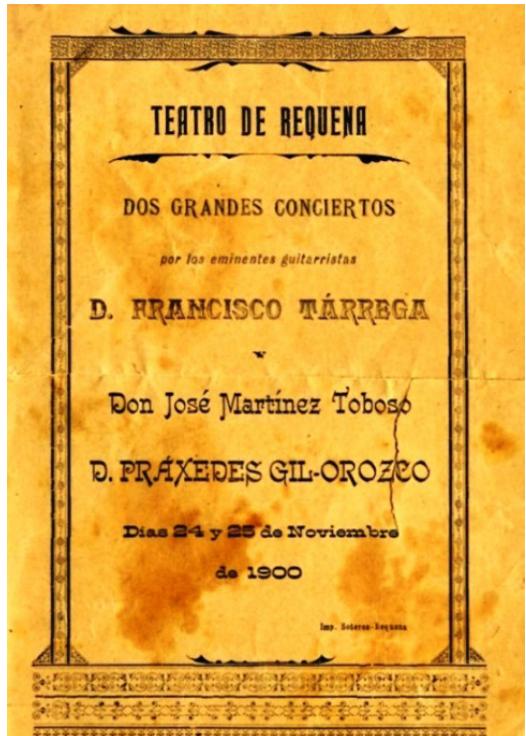
¹⁷ Roda, *El guitarrista Gil-Orozco*, 165.

¹⁸ *O Commercio de S. Paulo* (São Paulo) 12, no. 3,649 (May 1, 1904): 2.

¹⁹ Josefina Robledo (1892–1972) was a student of Francisco Tárrega. In 1914, she started a concert tour through Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil. She lived in South America for a decade, first in Argentina and later in Brazil. Although I could not find the exact dates of Robledo's residence in São Paulo, news reports in periodicals indicate that she lived there between 1917 and 1919. In 1924, she returned to Spain. Josefina Robledo's most famous student in São Paulo was Oswaldo Soares, a native of the city who published the guitar method *A Escola de Tárrega: Método completo de violão* (The School of Tárrega: Complete Guitar Method, 1932). For further information about Robledo, see Leandro Márcio Gonçalves, "O processo de difusão do violão clássico no Brasil através da 'Escola de Tárrega' entre 1916 e 1960" (master's thesis, University of Évora, 2015).

²⁰ Roda, *El guitarrista Gil-Orozco*, 143–44.

Figure 1 The cover and program for two concerts performed by Tárrega, Toboso, and Gil-Orozco in the small town of Requena, Valencia, November 24–25, 1900. Roda, *El guitarrista Gil-Orozco*, 171.



SÁBADO, 24	DOMINGO, 25
CONCIERTO TÁRREGA	CONCIERTO DE BENEFICIO
CON LA COOPERACIÓN DE LOS SEÑORES	en favor de las obras de la Plaza de Toros de Requena, en construcción, ofrecido á esta ciudad por el
TOBOSO Y GIL-OROZCO	SR. GIL-OROZCO con la galante cooperación de sus eminentes colegas
PROGRAMA	TÁRREGA Y TOBOSO
1.ª PARTE	PROGRAMA
1.º L. GANNE. Marcha Lorraine. Toboso G.-Orozco.	1.ª PARTE
2.º K. BELA. Retreta Austriaca. Id.	1.º R. CHAM. Duo de «La Revoltosa» Toboso G.-Orozco.
3.º SCHUMMAN. (a. Meledía. Tárrega.	2.º ESTELLES. Gavota de «Las Escopetas» Id.
4.º ARRIETA. Miscelánea de Marina. Tárrega.	3.º ALBENIZ. Serenata «Granada» Tárrega.
2.ª PARTE	4.º CHURCA. Seguidillas del «Chaleco Blanco» Id.
1.º ESTELLES. Gabota de «Las Escopetas». Toboso G.-Orozco.	2.ª PARTE
2.º ALBENIZ. Serenata Española. Tárrega.	1.º HUMMEL. Tema alemán con variaciones. Toboso G.-Orozco.
3.º CHOPIN. Nocturno número 2. Id.	2.º TÁRREGA. Capricho árabe. Tárrega.
4.º TÁRREGA. Motivos españoles. Id.	3.º SCHUBERT. Momentos musicales. Id.
3.ª PARTE	4.º MALATS. Tema. Id.
1.º F. CABALLERO. Alborada del «Señor Joaquín». Toboso G.-Orozco.	3.ª PARTE
2.º ALBENIZ. Seguidillas Sevillanas. Id.	1.º GILEY. Wals. «Loín du Bal» Toboso G.-Orozco.
3.º TÁRREGA. Fantasia Española. Id.	2.º MOZART. Miscelánea. Tárrega.
4.º TÁRREGA. Variaciones sobre el carnaval de Venecia. Id.	3.º VALVERDE. Gavota de «Marcha de Cádiz» Id.
A las 8 y media en punto.	4.º TÁRREGA. Gran Jota Aragonesa. Id.
	A las 8 y media en punto

in Cuba.²¹ This last fact may explain why some Brazilian historical records incorrectly identify the Spanish guitarist as Cuban.²²

Records of Gil-Orozco's commercial, pedagogical, and artistic endeavors establish him as a fundamental figure in the history of the guitar in São Paulo. Beginning in 1901, he represented the guitar factory Pascual Roch & Co. (headquartered in Valencia, Spain) as an instrument importer, displaying the company's instruments at Casa Bevilacqua.²³ Given this association with Pascual Roch, he may also have been responsible for disseminating Roch's *Método moderno para guitarra*, a method inspired by Francisco Tárrega, who was Roch's teacher. If this surmise is correct, this would be yet another indication that Tárrega's teachings were introduced into Brazil toward the end of the nineteenth century, and not later as previously supposed.

In 1903, Gil-Orozco became co-owner of a string factory — A Torcedora Valenciana de Orosco & Blanes — in the Mooca neighborhood in São Paulo.²⁴ The factory manufactured strings of all types, diameters, and gauges, plaited and with extra fibers, using the materials hemp,²⁵ flax, and jute. These strings were sold in the city and the countryside and exported to the states of Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, Bahia, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, and Minas Gerais.²⁶ Certainly, both Gil-Orozco and Toboso would have faced difficulties in finding strings for their guitars while touring Brazil, and this may have provided the impetus for Gil-Orozco to open a string factory. The strings produced by Orosco & Blanes were made for a variety of purposes and were exported to the places where the duo had performed in concerts, showing that one benefit of these performances for Gil-Orozco was the commercial network it established, raising the odds of success for his enterprises in São Paulo.²⁷

Turning to Gil-Orozco's activities as a performer, he is thought to have been the first guitarist to perform solo guitar concerts in the city, back in 1904 — supposedly playing “classical works, Spanish zarzuelas, and a *Fantasia Original*, of his own composition” at the Teatro Santana. This claim, which comes from a 1967 issue of *Violão e Mestres*, is not corroborated by any of the periodicals circulating São Paulo in 1904.²⁸ Gil-Orozco did, however, perform in charitable events in São Paulo — perhaps a

21 The Spanish-American war took place from April 21 to August 13, 1898, following the United States' intervention in the Cuban War of Independence.

22 The earliest reference to Gil-Orozco's nationality that has been found comes from the Uruguayan guitarist Isaías Sávio in *Violão e Mestres* (São Paulo) 2, no. 9 (1968): 51. The spelling of his family name is also noteworthy: Gil-Orozco was often referred to in periodicals as simply Orosco or Orozco.

23 *O Commercio de São Paulo* (São Paulo) 9, no. 2,310 (August 24, 1901): 1.

24 Roda, *El guitarrista Gil-Orozco*, 145.

25 For further information, see Patrizio Barbieri, “Roman and Neapolitan Gut Strings 1550–1950,” *Galpin Society Journal*, no. 59 (2006): 147–81. Barbieri discusses material used for strings in Europe and mentions the use of hemp to make strings for musical instruments in eighteenth-century France.

26 *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 14,284 (May 25, 1903): 2.

27 Marília Dalva Klaumann Canovas, *Imigrantes espanhóis na Pauliceia: Trabalho e sociabilidade urbana, 1890–1922* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2009), 289.

28 *Violão e Mestres* (São Paulo) 2, no. 7 (1967): 25.

further indication that he intentionally cultivated a network of relationships to support his many endeavors in the city.

In 1906, Gil-Orozco performed in the prestigious Salão Steinway (Steinway Hall)²⁹ alongside several influential teachers and musicians, as reported in the newspaper *Correio Paulistano* (roughly, the São Paulo Mail):

In Salão Steinway, a concert was held by the experienced Spanish guitarist Gil-Orozco, valuably assisted by the distinguished pianist and illustrious lady Mrs. Elvira Guimarães da Fonseca, by Mr. Alberto Baltar, and by the distinguished teachers Chiafarelli, G. Bastiani, and G. Rochi. . . . To Mr. Gil-Orozco were given, naturally, the evening's honors. He played all his parts in the program with wonderful clarity and fine taste. At times, he enraptured the hall, who warmly applauded him, especially during Arcas's *Cantos da Andaluzia* and Tárrega's Prelude and Menuett, the latter movement also being performed as an encore.³⁰

Certainly, Gil-Orozco's participation in these concerts show how active he was in the cultural life of the city, but it also shows how diverse the guitar's social role really was — despite its being perceived as a marginalized instrument, unsuited for the upper echelons of society.

Three of Gil-Orozco's compositions are currently known: *Recuerdo de Pernambuco*, *Gavota*, and *Maria* (Mazurka). A 1931 manuscript of *Gavota* is present in the Coleção Ronoel Simões, and all three works were published by the Biblioteca Daniel Fortea, in Madrid.³¹

According to Ronoel Simões, Gil-Orozco taught in São Paulo between 1901 and 1908.³² This again reinforces the hypothesis that he introduced the teachings of the Tárrega School. Importantly, a 1907 article about the city of Campinas includes the name of the Spanish guitarist as one of the teachers in the city of São Paulo, corroborating Simões's information:

CAMPINAS – A committee consisting of the conductor Mr. Sant'Anna Gomes, Mr. Alvaro Ribeiro, Mr. Lafayette Egidio, and Mr. Henrique de Barcellos is producing a grand vocal and instrumental concert at S. Carlos theater, for the next period of Carnival. Invited to this artistic contest are ladies of this city; artists who have been working here, such as Ladies Elisa Monteiro, Olga Massucci, Romelia Catelli, Malvina Pereira Cauli, Guiomar Novaes; professors Luiz de Padua Machado, the baritone

29 Salão Steinway was absorbed by the Conservatory of Music and Drama, which started its activities in 1906; it became the conservatory's concert hall.

30 *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 15,536 (November 18, 1906): 3.

31 The library's catalogue can be consulted at: <https://bibliotecafortea.com/>.

32 *Violão e Mestres* (São Paulo) 2, no. 7 (1967): 25. However, the later date would have to have been 1907, not 1908, since Gil-Orozco returned permanently to Spain in 1907. See Roda, *El guitarrista Gil-Orozco*, 197.

C. Silva, Virgilio Angelo, Guido Rocchi, Pattapio Silva, Gil Orosco, etc., and the conductors de Rimini and Antonio Leal.³³

Even though no news articles have been found regarding his work as a teacher, one cannot dismiss the possibility that Gil-Orozco also taught guitar in São Paulo between 1890 and 1899. Notice again how he is named alongside the most prestigious Brazilian artists of the time: among the names listed in the article are the flutist Patápio Silva (1880–1907), who hailed from Santa Catarina, the pianist Guiomar Novaes (1894–1979), and the Italian cellist Guido Rocchi, who took part in the founding of the São Paulo Conservatory of Music and Drama.³⁴

III. The Guitar and the Press in Nineteenth-Century São Paulo

In the state of São Paulo in the first half of the nineteenth century, accounts in periodicals indicate that the guitar was cultivated among enslaved populations, especially in the countryside.³⁵ Several notices describing “runaway slaves” offer such descriptions as “[is] very keen on revelries, sings, and plays the guitar,”³⁶ “knows how to read and write and play the guitar,”³⁷ “plays the guitar with the left hand,”³⁸ and “is a left-handed guitar player.”³⁹

Starting in the 1830s, one finds the first mentions of the selling and buying of guitars between private individuals, as in an 1841 advertisement for “a French guitar with a case, a music stand of very modern taste, with two elastic candlesticks that you can disassemble completely.”⁴⁰ The inclusion of the latter items (a music stand and portable candlesticks) suggests that the seller knew how to read music.

The establishment of the São Francisco Law School in 1827 was crucial to the cultural and musical development of the city of São Paulo. A newspaper from Rio de Janeiro reported the first jury trial to take place in São Paulo; it describes how the students, who had arrived one year before, organized an impromptu serenade after the conclusion of the trial:

33 *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 15,594 (January 16, 1907): 3.

34 Antonio Candido, *Teresina etc.* (São Paulo: Cosac Naif, 2007), 20.

35 This information was found in a search of nineteenth-century periodicals in the Brazilian National Library’s digital newspaper archive, available at: <http://bndigital.bn.gov.br/hemeroteca-digital/>. The data forms part of my doctoral research about the consolidation of the guitar scene in the city of São Paulo: see Flavia Prando, “O mundo do violão em São Paulo: Processos de consolidação do circuito do instrumento na cidade (1890–1932)” (doctoral diss., University of São Paulo, 2021).

36 *O Novo Farol Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 454 (August 10, 1836): 4.

37 *O Farol Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 224 (June 27, 1829): 4.

38 *O Farol Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 262 (October 24, 1829): 4.

39 *O Farol Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 367 (July 22, 1830): 4.

40 *A Phenix* (São Paulo), no. 364 (October 9, 1841): 4.

On the street, seeing the festive illuminations that were put in place for various happy reasons, it occurred to students and non-students alike that they ought to find a regimental band to sing an anthem. This, however, could not be arranged. The students then formed their own band, with flutes, fiddles, and guitars, going first to someone's house, where tea was served, which, despite being prepared in a hurry and for so many people, one can say was splendid. There followed dances, waltzes...⁴¹

The first reference to any guitar method circulating in the city of São Paulo occurs in 1854, in the form of an advertisement for a method by the Italian Francesco Molino (1768–1847).⁴² In 1860, *Revista Dramatica* mentions a guitarist called Giovanni Scioppio, “who performs, on the guitar, the most difficult parts that are asked of him.”⁴³ Another reference to a guitarist performing in the city names Clementino Lisboa, an engineer and amateur guitarist who lived in Rio de Janeiro.⁴⁴ Here he is in an account of a soirée in São Paulo, in 1864, at the home of a Mr. Sizenando Nabuco:⁴⁵

The skilled artist Mr. Lisboa was the king of the party: extracting from the strings of his guitar such sweet and harmonious sounds that no guitar will ever be able to imitate, the eminent artist displayed an elevated soul and superior talent. *Norma* and *La Traviata*, two supreme sighs of music's splendid goddess, were interpreted and performed with a feeling that went straight to the soul of the artists, wrapping one and all in a single net of vaporous passions.⁴⁶

The magazine *O Violão* was later to call Lisboa the first hero of the concert guitar in Brazil, who had “the courage to face the audience” when others did not.⁴⁷

In 1878, press coverage of a charitable performance at the Escola Americana (American School)⁴⁸ mentions the appearance of a guitar duo. The concert, held

41 *Astréa* (Rio de Janeiro), no. 383 (January 27, 1829): 4.

42 *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo) 1, no. 82 (October 2, 1854): 4. It is noteworthy that 1854 was also the year of foundation of this newspaper, which was the first daily newspaper of the province. It is possible, therefore, that the method was already in circulation in the city and that it started being advertised in the press only with the appearance of this periodical.

43 *Revista Dramatica* (São Paulo), no. 5 (June 3, 1860): 42.

44 *Amateur* in this sentence does not refer to Lisboa's technical and musical skills but to the fact that he had a different profession as his livelihood.

45 Sizenando, brother to the politician and diplomat Joaquim Nabuco, was a student at the Academy of Law. At its opening on September 7, 1964, the São José Theater staged his play *A Túnica de Nessus*. See Roberto Pompeu Toledo, *A capital de solidão: Uma história de São Paulo das origens a 1900* (São Paulo: Objectiva, 2012), 341. More information about the soirée and Sizenando Barreto Nabuco de Araújo can be found in Carlos Penteado de Rezende, *Tradições musicais da Faculdade de Direito de São Paulo*, commemorative edition for São Paulo's fourth centennial (São Paulo: Saraiva, 1954), 205.

46 *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo) 11, no. 2,393 (May 11, 1864): 2.

47 *O Violão* (Rio de Janeiro) 1, no. 1 (December 1928): 9.

48 The school was founded in 1870 by Reverend Chamberlain's wife, Mary Annesley Chamberlain, to care for non-Catholic children. Initially operating in the Chamberlains' residence, the school moved in 1876 to number 70 in São João Street, on the corner with Ipiranga

in the school building by its directors, was organized “for the benefit of drought victims in the north of the Empire.”⁴⁹ Among the numbers performed was “O canto da coruja, [played] on two guitars by the amateurs Theotônio Gonçalves Corrêa and Manoel Maximiano de Toledo.”⁵⁰

One of these “amateurs,” Theotônio Gonçalves Corrêa (c. 1860–c. 1935), performed on the radio and made phonograph recordings at the end of the 1920s.⁵¹ An 1882 article suggests he may have been the first guitarist to publish music in São Paulo:

PERY. Yesterday, Mr. Theotônio Gonçalves Corrêa published a musical composition with this title. *Pery* is a tango paulista of rare beauty; we heard it performed on the piano and on the guitar, and especially on the latter instrument, we found Mr. Theotônio’s music delightful. Besides being the inspired composer he now reveals himself to be, he is also, in the opinion of those who listened to him, not only São Paulo’s first guitarist, but an excellent one.⁵²

Although the score for this “tango paulista” has not yet been found,⁵³ another piece has been located—namely *Recordação saudosa*,⁵⁴ published by L. Levy & Irmão (n.d.) and subtitled “sentimental mazurka.” This score is for piano and bears the text “by the same author as *Pery*, Tango, and *Dodoquinha*, Polka.” Those earlier pieces must have been successful, since they are used to promote this one.

Street, where it ran for forty-two years and received a visit by the Emperor Dom Pedro II in 1878. Antônio Barreto do Amaral, *Dicionário de história de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial, 2006).

- 49 The Great Drought (Grande Seca) lasted for three years, 1877–79, affecting northeastern Brazil and most of all the Ceará province. It marked the most devastating event of drought in Brazil’s history, causing the death of over four hundred thousand people. Over 180 thousand people migrated from the Northeast to various parts of the country. See Denise Ap. Soares de Moura, “Andantes de novos rumos: A vinda de migrantes cearenses para fazendas de café Paulistas em 1878,” *Revista Brasileira de História* 17, no. 34 (1997): 119–32.
- 50 *Diário de S. Paulo* (São Paulo) 13, no. 3,631 (January 27, 1878): 2. *O canto da coruja* is a well-known polka by Emílio do Lago. Highly skilled in the art of guitar playing, Toledo (c. 1833–c. 1890) was a well-known tachygrapher who led this service for many years in provincial legislative assemblies in São Paulo. See the website *Petroucic genealogy*, <https://www.genealogieonline.nl/petroucic-genealogy/156579.php>.
- 51 These performances by Theotônio Corrêa were in trio with João Avelino Camargo and José Martins Duarte de Melo. This is the earliest Brazilian guitar trio we know of. They recorded five tracks for the Brunswick label: the gavotte *Iole* and the choro *Sabãozinho*, by Avelino Camargo (1930); the choros *Cadê o Cruzeiro* and *Bancando o Nazareth*, by Theotônio Corrêa; and the choro *Negrinha de filó*, by Avelino Camargo (1929). *Cadê o Cruzeiro* (titled *Cruzeiro* in the score and identified as a *maxixe*) and *Iole* were published for solo guitar but were arranged for guitar trio especially for the recordings and performances on radio, as well as for live performance in public.
- 52 *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo) 29, no. 7,850 (December 2, 1882): 2.
- 53 *Paulista* means “native of or relating to the state of São Paulo” (not to be confused with *paulistano*, which relates to the city of São Paulo, capital of that state).—Trans.
- 54 The piano score [c. 1885?] was obtained through the e-commerce website *Mercado Livre* in 2018.

Toward the end of the 1910s, again in the *Correio Paulistano*, an anonymous author reminisced nostalgically about the guitar as it was cultivated in late-nineteenth-century São Paulo, again mentioning Theotônio Corrêa and corroborating the impression that there was a “premodern” tradition.⁵⁵ According to the author, this tradition even had an heir in Américo Jacomino:

Certainly, the reader will not be familiar with Venâncio, the Pauliceia’s ultra-guitarist of the time:⁵⁶ but he was a master of the instrument who, when playing his favorite—the Lasquet [sic]—forgot himself and others and lost his grip on reality, making the metallic basses roar or the trebles cackle, in a shrill laughter of nervous commotion. Perhaps they never even got to hear Theotônio, another worthy guitarist who made his name in the São Paulo of the old days. He was particularly extraordinary in the “Canto da Coruja” [Call of the Owl], which would give the hearer the aural illusion of hearing that ominous nocturnal bird, late into the night, and make the superstitious shiver with its mournful moan.

Where [is] the guitar of those days? Nowadays we only know of Americo Jacomino, nicknamed “Canhoto,” who still maintains some of those guitarists’ ways.⁵⁷

These glimpses of Theotônio Corrêa’s work—his three publications with Levy, his duo with Maximiano, and these accounts of his playing in the *Correio Paulistano*—offer just a few traces of guitar activity from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and they certainly deserve more attention.

IV. The Toboso–Gil-Orozco Duo in the São Paulo Press: Alexandre Levy’s Reviews

Alexandre Levy (1864–92) was a composer, pianist, conductor, and music critic from São Paulo. His parents—the French clarinetist Henrique Luís Levy and his wife Anne Marie Teodoreth—were the founders of Casa Levy, a piano and music store that remained an important meeting place for São Paulo’s musicians throughout the nineteenth century. In 1887, Alexandre Levy left to study in Europe. He met professors Cesare Dominiceti (1821–88) and Alberto Giannini (1842–1903) in Milan, and in Paris he took lessons in harmony and counterpoint with Vincenzo Ferroni (1858–1934) and with Debussy’s teacher Émile Durand (1830–1903). Upon his return to Brazil, he resumed his artistic activities: he organized concerts and began writing music reviews in the newspaper *Correio Paulistano* under the pseudonym “Figarote.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Premodern*, that is, in relation to the previously mentioned *modern* guitar represented by Arcas, Tárrega, and Torres.

⁵⁶ *Pauliceia* refers to the city of São Paulo.—Trans.

⁵⁷ *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo), no. 20,092 (June 12, 1919): 3.

⁵⁸ This biographical information is taken from the Enciclopédia do Itaú Cultural, <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/pessoa593911/alexandre-levy>.

Said Tuma characterizes Alexandre Levy the critic as a discreet voice for change:

Here, too, one can find evidence of his modernity. By frequently adopting an attitude of moderation toward musical matters — often taking a comic tone in his writings — as well as regularly focusing his commentaries on technical aspects of musical performance, Levy set himself apart from other newspaper writers in the [state] capital. Although, at times, his articles promulgated something of the civilizing point of view current among the São Paulo elite, with its forward-looking notions, Levy managed to soften his message with moderation and humor, presenting himself as a more discreet and yes, more modern writer.⁵⁹

Thus, Levy's reviews for the *Correio Paulistano* should be understood within the context of the Brazilian elite's civilizing agenda; they also coincide with a modernizing process initiated by the advent of the Republic (1889).

Levy used the halls of Casa Levy to host “concerts for the press”: here, musicians would perform private recitals for the local press a few days before a public concert (a practice that remained customary in Brazil throughout the twentieth century). By performing in these recitals, musicians provided material for journalists; they, in turn, prompted the public to attend a concert that had already won the endorsement of influential people in the city. “Figarote”—that is to say, Levy himself—likewise penned reviews, in which he thanked Casa Levy for hosting the private event and urged readers to attend the public concert. Afterwards, he would write one more article — this time, the review of the public performance.

All of this sleight of hand notwithstanding, Levy's behavior reflected the modernizing project highlighted by Tuma. In tune with the principles of the so-called “generation of 1870,”⁶⁰ he set himself the task of moving Brazil along with the times, of placing it in “the concert of nations,” and thus integrating it into an international modernity. In order to modernize the country, it was necessary to encourage, through direct action of intellectuals, an “increase in the cultural level of the populace.”

This intention may explain why, in contrast with early twentieth-century critics, Levy did not belittle the guitar when he complimented the performances of the two

59 Said Tuma, “O nacional e o popular na música de Alexandre Levy: Bases de um projeto de modernidade” (master's thesis, University of São Paulo, 2008), 137.

60 The latter half of the nineteenth century marked a period of major upheaval for the Empire of Brazil. Inspired by contemporaneous events in Europe, various parties and social actors began to elaborate a project of renewal, founded on notions of progress and “civilization.” They worked both consciously and unconsciously, directly and indirectly, from contrasting perspectives, and via an array of conversations and practices. An intellectual movement — the so-called Generation of 1870 — emerged, with the mission of analyzing Brazilian society and outlining a path that would remake Brazil as a more modern, “civilized” nation. See Bruno Gontyo do Couto, “O debate sobre meio e raça na geração intelectual de 1870: A construção de um projeto de civilização para o Brasil,” *Em Tese* 13, no. 1 (January/June 2016): 94–95.

Spaniards, Toboso and Gil-Orozco. On the contrary, he displayed a fair knowledge of the instrument's real capabilities in such passages as this:⁶¹

The compliments the two artists received from the press in Rio de Janeiro and in Santos are not undeserved, for they are top-notch guitarists, [who] can draw out from their instruments, especially built according to their plans, . . . the most perfect effects that are possible for a guitarist to produce from their instrument. . . . Mr. Toboso played solo and with great mastery a potpourri of Spanish national arias where we could listen to the jota, the seguidilla, and other characteristic dances from the country of las niñas guapas. (June 1)

. . .duly noting the correctness with which they modulate the keys, their precision, and the impeccable tuning of the instruments. (June 9)

Regarding the audience's reception, the critic stated: "It was another triumph for the charismatic and guapos muchachos, who knew how to keep the audience quiet and attentive throughout the works they played and were always, at the end of each work, warmly and enthusiastically applauded" (June 9). Noting how large their audience was, Levy recommended that the duo perform more concerts in the state capital:

Given the high demand they had the night before last and because a large part of our capital has not yet heard these two *sui generis* artists, it will be the right choice if they decide to give one or even two other concerts, so that the people from São Paulo know the worth of a Jota and a Zapateado performed by Messrs. Toboso and Orozco's magical guitars. (June 9)

About the eleven-string guitar, the critic commented: "In form, these instruments are much larger and rounder than the ones we know: they have eleven strings, eight of them over the fretboard and three of them floating, thus displaying a range of three or four octaves, if I am not mistaken" (June 1). Both reviews describe the duo's repertoire:

We would highlight the waltz *Les Sirenes*, by Thomé; Balzoni's Menuet; the Waltz in A minor, by Chopin; a fantasia on passages from the opera *A Masked Ball*. . . (June 1)

61 All quotations to the end of this section are from Levy's two reviews of the Toboso–Gil-Orozco duo in the *Correio Paulistano* (São Paulo). His first review appears in CP 36, no. 10,119 (June 1, 1890): 2; the second appears in CP 36, no. 10,125 (June 9, 1890): 2. To distinguish the two sources, dates are given in line. Researchers using the website <http://bndigital.bn.br/acer-vo-digital/correio-paulistano/090972> will need the issue numbers given in this note.

We also highlight Capucho Hespagnol Moraima, Tescette de las Ratas from Gran Via, which was played as an encore, and several fantasias on the operas *A Masked Ball*, *The Troubadour*, *Poliuto*. (June 9)⁶²

v. Conclusion

Although we are only beginning to unveil the cultural life of the guitar in nineteenth-century Brazil, the information found so far reveals that the common conception of a marginalized instrument, one with few resources except when handled by an extraordinary virtuoso, is a twentieth-century construct representing just one possible narrative of an instrument that was ubiquitous in multiple sectors of Brazilian society.

We learn from nineteenth-century periodicals that the guitar shared repertoire and musical practices with other instruments. In the publications quoted, it is notable that they contain statements denoting familiarity with the guitar, not surprise: “We heard it performed on the piano and on the guitar, and especially on the latter instrument”; “The two artists draw out the most perfect effects that are possible for a guitarist to produce from their instrument”; “In form, these instruments are much larger and rounder than the ones we know.” Early twentieth-century foreign guitarists, on the other hand, did surprise the press, as exemplified in a statement by the poet Manuel Bandeira:⁶³ “It [the guitar] was, however, rehabilitated by the visit we received of two foreigners, who came to reveal to our amateurs all the resources and the true school of Spain’s great virtuosos. I am referring to Agostinho Barrios⁶⁴ and Josefina Robledo.” Mário de Andrade provides another example: “As for instruments like the guitar, [which were] left to the common folk for a while, when a virtuoso emerges, it is the product of sheer luck.”⁶⁵

These nineteenth-century guitarists followed the common trend (imported to São Paulo from Europe) of performing theatrical repertoire — alternating opera extracts, ballads from comedies of manners, folk songs, and ballroom dances. Therefore, the guitar was part of the broader context of the city’s musical life.

62 *Les sirènes* is presumably the waltz for piano *La sirène*, by Francis Thomé (1850–1909); “Balzoni” must be Giovanni Bolzoni (1841–1919); *A Masked Ball* (*Un ballo in maschera*) is Verdi’s opera; *Capucho hespanhol Moraima* likely refers to Morayma, the last Moorish queen of the Kingdom of Granada, who was wife to King Boabdil (c. 1460–c. 1533) and a source of inspiration for several writers and poets; the zarzuela *La gran vía* is by Federico Chueca (1846–1908); *The Troubadour* (*Il trovatore*) is Verdi’s opera; *Poliuto* is Donizetti’s opera.

63 Manoel Bandeira, “A literatura do violão,” *Ariel Revista de Cultura Musical* (São Paulo), no. 13 (1924): 463–68.

64 The Paraguayan guitarist Agustín Barrios played a crucial role in disseminating the guitar in South America. Cyro Delvizio discusses Barrios’s activity in Brazil in *Agustín Barrios in Dreamland: The Amazing Journey of a Paraguayan Guitarist across Brazil*, trans. Théo Amon (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2016).

65 *Diário Nacional* (São Paulo) 3, no. 703 (October 15, 1929): 7.

New technologies have provided us with more tools for improving our knowledge of the past, allowing us to search deeper for information on the sonorities and musical practices of yore. Thus, the digitization of periodicals, the development of ever-finer search engines, and the democratization of access via the worldwide web have revealed the guitar's presence in contexts that were previously unknown. Drawing on this emerging information as our guide, we are able to track down documentation about the guitar in the nineteenth century in public and private collections and to reappraise the instrument's popularity. Quite apart from the substantial increase in available repertoire, this is a new moment for guitar historiography; a sea of opportunity for research that will reshape the history of the instrument, thus moving back half a century, at the least, what we thought was the beginning of solo guitar tradition in Brazil.⁶⁶



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