

BRAZILIAN ADAPTATIONS OF BAROQUE AND CLASSICAL ELEMENTS

IN THE PIANO SONATA IN F MINOR, OPUS 9 BY

ALBERTO NEPOMUCENO (1864–1920)

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Alberto Nepomuceno was one of the leading figures in developing Brazilian art music at the turn of the twentieth century. He became widely known for his Brazilian art songs and kept promoting Brazilian music and the use of Portuguese as an “art language” throughout his life. Nepomuceno has widely been seen as a nationalist composer, yet some of his works adopt a more European style. In this study, I argue that Nepomuceno incorporates European musical languages in his Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 9. I display the rich interaction of Brazilian national identity and European influence within Nepomuceno’s musical life. I also provide a thorough formal analysis of this piano sonata to argue that in some of his music he adopted a distinctively European musical language, including baroque and classical elements. In addition to analyzing the sonata-form and rondo-form elements, this dissertation discusses the use of several important topics in the work, including the Siciliano rhythm, contrapuntal writing, pedal points with organ effects, and impact of Brahms on Nepomuceno’s piano writing. Moreover, I analyze how Nepomuceno assimilated European musical styles as the basis for his own compositions, as well as the innovations with which he augmented those styles. An analysis of this sonata can enhance our understandings of how musical training in Europe shaped the production of Latin American composers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Alberto Nepomuceno (1864–1920) has widely been seen as a nationalist composer, yet some of his works adopt a more European style. In this study, I argue that Nepomuceno incorporates European musical languages in his Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 9. In the following chapter, I display the rich interaction of Brazilian national identity and European influence within Nepomuceno’s musical life. In Chapter 3, I provide a thorough formal analysis of this piano sonata to argue that in some of his music he adopted a distinctively European musical language, including baroque and classical elements.¹

Alberto Nepomuceno was one of the leading figures in developing Brazilian art music at the turn of the twentieth century. He was born in Fortaleza, the state capital of Ceará, Brazil. Nepomuceno received his early musical education from his father, then subsequently left Brazil in 1888 to study at several European conservatories. As his career continued, Nepomuceno developed into an accomplished composer, conductor, and educator. He became widely known for his Brazilian art songs and kept promoting Brazilian music and the use of Portuguese as an “art language” throughout his life.² Among these accolades, Nepomuceno also wrote various pieces for solo piano, which serve as the subject of this dissertation. The twenty-three piano works have received little attention from scholars and performers.

Modern pianists primarily focus on studying and performing repertoire within the European canon. There is no doubt that German and French composers wrote splendid works;

¹ Other European-influenced works include his Symphony in G minor and String Quartets.

² Rawlianne Riggs, “The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer: A Performance Guide to Nine Songs by Alberto Nepomuceno” (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2019), 2. The official language of Brazil is Portuguese, with more native speakers than the country of Portugal itself.

however, musicians from Latin America, equally creative and sophisticated, have been largely neglected, and deserve more recognition. The Brazilian composer Alberto Nepomuceno is one such figure. His compositions are not only refreshing as performance pieces, but also practical as pedagogical resources. In addition to these prejudices toward European music, Nepomuceno's piano works also suffer from the fact that they are dwarfed by the works of his most famous pupil, Heitor Villa-Lobos. Consequently, Nepomuceno's piano works are rarely researched or performed; my dissertation will help to fill up this lacuna.

The Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 9 was composed in 1893. It is a large-scale work, with three movements. This sonata was first performed by Nepomuceno at the Instituto Nacional in Rio de Janeiro in August 1895. His String Quartet No. 3, Symphony in G Minor, and opera *Artemis* are his most significant compositions. However, Nepomuceno's piano sonata is worth studying as well. As I illustrate, the piece follows the traditional structures of a classical piano sonata, despite being written at the end of the Romantic period.

Purpose

In this study, I examine the baroque and classical features of the Piano Sonata in F Minor by Alberto Nepomuceno. In addition to analyzing the sonata-form and rondo-form elements, this dissertation also discusses the use of several important topics in the work, including the Siciliano rhythm, the severe style (contrapuntal writing and pedal points with organ effects), and other salient musical features. Moreover, I analyze how Nepomuceno assimilated European musical styles as the basis for his own compositions, as well as the innovations with which he augmented those styles.

The first goal of this project is to discuss Nepomuceno's piano music as a whole, thus placing my discussion of the F-minor sonata within a fuller context. The second goal is to discuss Nepomuceno as an occidentalist composer. Occidentalism is a designation that applies to Latin American composers who studied in Western Europe and imported contemporary styles into their countries, passing them on to the succeeding generations. From roughly 1870 to 1920, different governments in Latin America provided monetary incentives for composers to receive training in Europe, often under the condition that they return and teach in their home countries.³ This condition proved to be important, for it resulted in the transplantation of Western European values into Latin America. Therefore, an analysis of this sonata can enhance our understandings of how musical training in Europe shaped the production of Latin American composers.

Lastly, an analysis of this sonata will be useful for today's piano community by providing performers and aficionados with insights into Nepomuceno and his musical accomplishments. This leading composer in Brazilian concert music of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries can be studied to facilitate future research into the works of similar Latin American composers and their characteristics, whether national or cosmopolitan.

Significance and State of Research

Since Nepomuceno was considered an occidentalist composer, it is significant to understand the terminology surrounding Occidentalism. Occidentalism refers to a special kind of Westernization. In the nineteenth century, Latin American musicians and audiences were fascinated with Western European music, often in lieu of their local repertoires. This fascination

³ Bernardo Illari, "Arturo Berutti: Musical Images of the Liberal Nation," ed. Michael Braun (Regensburg, DE: Einbürgerung der Klänge/Naturalising Sounds, forthcoming), 5.

led to a phenomenon in which Latin American composers were sent on government-sponsored trips to study in Europe and were expected to bring back the “great music” and musical technologies that were unavailable in their home countries.⁴ Nepomuceno embarked on this particular path when, at the age of twenty-four, he left Brazil to study composition in Rome and Berlin, eventually returning to Brazil to teach in his newly acquired Western European style. After winning third prize for an anthem competition, he was awarded a grant that funded the continuation of his European studies.⁵

As part of his occidentalist journey, Nepomuceno became known as an educator. One of the earliest dissertations on Nepomuceno addresses music education in twentieth-century Brazil. It discusses Nepomuceno’s time at the Instituto Nacional de Musica in Rio de Janeiro, where he promoted the idea that public performance of Brazilian compositions should be consistently encouraged.⁶ This national sentiment is supported by Nepomuceno’s advocacy for art songs in Portuguese—Brazil’s official language—rather than the more traditional languages of Italian and French; this preference is one way in which Nepomuceno adapts Western European musical heritage to specifically Brazilian conditions.

Due to Nepomuceno’s occidentalism, it is important to understand the details of his musical training in Europe, a topic that is discussed in several recent publications. One article, by Tagliari Rodrigues Nunes de Sousa, explicitly describes Nepomuceno’s life and education in

⁴ Illari, “Arturo Berutti’s Argentina: Musical Images of the Liberal Nation,” 7.

⁵ Riggs, “The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer,” 14.

⁶ Ivana M. Pinho Kuhn, “Music Education in Brazil in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Analysis” (DMA diss., Boston University, 2000), 34.

Europe.⁷ Furthermore, a 2020 dissertation on Nepomuceno's *Série Brasileira* divides his biography into the usual three periods; the dissertation places great emphasis on Nepomuceno's strong connection with Edvard Grieg (1843–1907), his most significant mentor. The selected songs that are analyzed in the paper demonstrate a respect for Grieg's compositional techniques, as well as the influences of his European musical education.⁸

As an educator, Nepomuceno wrote many piano works for pedagogical purposes. Within his catalogue, there are twenty-three pieces written for piano and certain works specifically devoted to the left hand. Nepomuceno's interest in pieces for solo left hand can likely be attributed to the fact that his daughter was born without a right arm. In addition, he exhibited some interest in employing Brazilian folk dances into his compositions. For instance, in 1887 he wrote a piano piece called *Dança de Negros*, which was the first of several piano works written by Brazilian composers that drew upon African dancing.⁹

While there has been much research on Nepomuceno's compositional upbringing, analytical coverage of Nepomuceno's piano works is small and insufficient, and relevant articles are typically written in Portuguese. Consequently, my dissertation is the first publication in English that provides analytical insights on Nepomuceno's piano sonata.

⁷ Miranda Bartira Tagliari Rodrigues Nunes de Sousa, "Brazilian Series by Alberto Nepomuceno: Race, Philosophy and Political Agency in Symphonic Music at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2020), 12–22.

⁸ Laura Hammack Chipe, "Alberto Beriot Nepomuceno (1864–1920)," in *The Phenomenon of Singing International Symposium III*, ed. Andrea Rose and Ki Adams (Newfoundland, CA: Proceedings of the International Symposium, 2001), 60–61.

⁹ Simone Gorete Machado, "An Examination of Selected Piano Works by Francisco Mignone, Lorenzo Fernandez and Marlos Nobre Using the Corresponding Brazilian Dances as a Guide to Their Performance" (DMA diss., The University of Arizona, 2006), 29.

In my second chapter, I provide an introductory overview of Nepomuceno's two-hand works for piano, as well as an explanation of the general characteristics of the pieces, which include Mazurkas, Nocturnes, and the *Suíte Antiga*, Op. 11. I gained a broad view of Nepomuceno's piano writing styles based on Vermes' article, in which she lists a reformulation of the catalog of Nepomuceno's piano works.¹⁰

Only the editorial aspects of Nepomuceno's F-minor piano sonata have been examined in print; namely, the discussion addresses the publication process of the sonata—which the composer left in manuscript form—including the editorial problems and unusual situations it encountered. A useful overview of the piece is included as well, but no detailed analysis had been attempted prior to this dissertation.¹¹

Method

In order to show that Nepomuceno was an occidentalist composer, both European traditional features and the personal modifications introduced by the composer must be discussed. An analysis of this work from a traditional Western music standpoint helps to illustrate Nepomuceno's cosmopolitan background, especially in terms of structure, texture, and general musical style, including rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic elements.

¹⁰ Mónica Vermes, "A produção para piano a duas mãos de Alberto Nepomuceno: Características gerais e proposta de um novo catálogo," *Revista Música* 7, nos. 1–2 (1996): 80–90.

¹¹ Luiz Guilherme D. Goldberg, "Aspectos editoriais da Sonata para piano de Alberto Nepomuceno," in *I Colóquio Brasileiro de Arquivologia e Edição Musical*, ed. Paulo Castagna (Mariana, Minas Gerais, BR: Fundação Cultural e Educacional da Arquidiocese de Mariana, 2003), 147–64.

In my discussion of the structure and thematic material of each movement, I utilize the terminology and concepts from Hepokoski and Darcy's *Elements of Sonata Theory*.¹² This book discusses different sonata forms mainly based on late-eighteenth-century German music, with a particular focus on Mozart's works. It covers comprehensive explanations and examples of sonata form and rondo form, categorizing various sonatas into five broad types. According to Hepokoski and Darcy's typology, the first and second movements of Nepomuceno's F-minor sonata correspond to sonata "type 3" and "type 1" respectively, in which the composer follows conventions for both movements. The third movement, meanwhile, is a five-part rondo; although this structure exists outside of the scope of sonata theory, it is worth mentioning that five-part rondos are also a characteristic third-movement form. In other words, Nepomuceno's F-minor sonata can be said to exhibit a clear classical, Western European sonata structure, despite being written in 1894 by a Brazilian composer.

Nepomuceno realizes these structures through recognizable Western gestures, which can be analyzed through topic theory. The materials that I use for reference are Leonard Ratner's book *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*¹³ and Kofi Agawu's work on topic theory.¹⁴ As stated by Agawu, there are two stages of presenting a topical analysis: The first stage is to identify topics, and the second stage is to provide interpretations of them.¹⁵ For example, one

¹² James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹³ Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (London, UK: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1980).

¹⁴ V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

¹⁵ V. Kofi Agawu, "Topic Theory: Achievement, Critique, Prospects," in *Passagen/IMS Congress Zürich 2007: Fünf Hauptvorträge*, ed. Laurenz Lütteken and Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen (Zürich, CH: Bärenreiter, 2008), 51.

topic utilized by Nepomuceno's first movement is the use of duple-metered dance rhythms. The beginning motivic rhythm and the dotted Siciliano rhythm reappear throughout the movement. Nepomuceno also uses the "organ topic": he resorts to organ-like writing, in relation to the different registers of the piano. For instance, Nepomuceno frequently uses pedal points, a mainstay of organ composition. Near the end of the development in the first movement, his pedal points last for thirteen measures.

I also make a comparison of the sonata with relevant piano pieces by Franz Schubert and Johannes Brahms. This knowledge will help performers to make insightful performance decisions regarding musical expression and stylistic choices. This study is based on the score edited by Luiz Guilherme Goldberg.¹⁶

¹⁶ Alberto Nepomuceno, *Sonata in F minor Opus 9*, ed. Luiz Guilherme Goldberg (Rio de Janeiro, BR: Musica Brasilis, 2017), accessed October 23, 2022, <https://musicabrazilis.org.br/partituras/alberto-nepomuceno-sonata-em-fa-menor-opus-9>.

CHAPTER 2

NEPOMUCENO'S BRAZILIAN AND EUROPEAN UPBRINGING

In this chapter, I focus particularly on aspects of Nepomuceno's life that demonstrate how he, a Brazilian-born musician, was able to obtain a complete professional schooling into European concert music.

A Brief Overview of Nepomuceno's Life, Education, and Career

Alberto Nepomuceno was born on July 6, 1864, in Fortaleza, Brazil. Although his training began in Brazil—primarily with his father—it was limited in terms of scope. After seven years of study in Europe, Nepomuceno returned to Brazil, bringing Western-European compositional techniques with him, and subsequently transmitting them to students there. During his lifetime, he wrote a variety of works in different genres, including sacred music, art songs, symphonic music, chamber music, opera, and pieces for solo instruments; Western-European stylistic elements can be seen within each genre. In the sections that follow, I delve deeper into each of these facets of Nepomuceno's life.

Musical Training

Nepomuceno started his early musical education—both in piano and in violin—with his father, Victor Augusto Nepomuceno (1840–1880), an organist at the cathedral of Fortaleza.¹⁷ In 1880, his father passed away, and he was forced to work in a typographical shop to provide for his mother and sister. Later in life, he studied harmony with Maestro Euclides Fonseca (1853–

¹⁷ Riggs, "The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer," 9.

1929).¹⁸ In 1885, the Legislative Assembly of Ceará presented a petition to the Imperial Government for Nepomuceno to receive a scholarship to study in Europe. The proposal was initially rejected due to his involvement in the campaign to abolish slavery.¹⁹ As a result of receiving this funding, his musical opportunities quickly increased. In the same year, Nepomuceno moved to the capital, Rio de Janeiro; and in October, he gave a piano concert for the prestigious nineteenth-century Brazilian intellectual society, Club Beethoven. Meanwhile, Nepomuceno continued his study of harmony with composer Miguel Cardoso, who held a degree from the Conservatory of Milan.²⁰

In 1888, Nepomuceno enrolled at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome; there, he began his studies in harmony with Eugenio Terziani (1824–1889) and piano with Giovanni Sgambati (1814–1914), and later with Cesare De Sanctis (1824–1916).²¹ On September 7 of the same year, the Brazilian monarchy was overthrown, and a republic was established. Shortly after, Nepomuceno took part in an 1890 competition for composing a hymn to celebrate this momentous event.²² He won third prize and received a grant from the provisional government which provided him with the opportunity to continue his studies in Europe.

In August of that same year, Nepomuceno moved to Berlin, where he enrolled in the Akademische Meisterschule and studied composition with Heinrich von Herzogenberg (1843–1900). Under the guidance of this new teacher, Nepomuceno started to become familiar with the

¹⁸ “Alberto Nepomuceno Collection and Biography,” Music Division of the Library of Congress, accessed October 21, 2022, https://findingaids.loc.gov/db/search/xq/searchMfer02.xq?_id=loc.music.eadmus.mu003004&_faSection=overview&_faSubsection=did&_dmdid=.

¹⁹ Riggs, “The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer,” 10.

²⁰ “Alberto Nepomuceno Collection and Biography,” Music Division of the Library of Congress.

²¹ “Alberto Nepomuceno Collection and Biography,” Music Division of the Library of Congress.

²² “Alberto Nepomuceno Collection and Biography,” Music Division of the Library of Congress.

music of Brahms. He also attended classes with two pianists whose impact on Nepomuceno's life would prove consequential. Through contact with the Polish piano pedagogue Theodor Leschetizky (1830–1915), Nepomuceno met Walborg Rendtler Bang, whom he would marry in 1893.²³ Bang was also a pupil of Grieg, leading to one of Nepomuceno's most important mentorships. As an advocate for national music, Grieg played a significant role in persuading Nepomuceno to write music that expressed his native Brazilian culture.

In 1892, Nepomuceno transferred to Berlin's Stern Conservatory to study composition and organ with Arnó Kleffel (1840–1913) and piano with Heinrich Ehrlich (1822–1899).²⁴ On April 17, 1894, Nepomuceno was appointed organ professor at the Instituto Nacional de Música in Rio de Janeiro. He accepted the position, but before going back to Brazil, the Brazilian government approved a fourteen-month extension to his grant. This extension enabled Nepomuceno to further his organ study in Paris under the guidance of the organist Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911) at the Schola Cantorum. In the city, Nepomuceno met several of his peers and contemporaries, including Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), Charles Bordes (1863–1909), Claude Debussy (1862–1918), and Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931).²⁵

Return to Brazil

Nepomuceno returned to Rio de Janeiro in 1895 and started his position as an organ teacher at the Instituto Nacional de Música. Aside from composing and teaching, Nepomuceno

²³ "Alberto Nepomuceno Collection and Biography," Music Division of the Library of Congress.

²⁴ Laura Hammack Chipe, "Alberto Beriot Nepomuceno: A Performer's Guide to Selected Songs" (DMA diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), 35.

²⁵ Pereira, *Música, Sociedade e Política*, 88.

was one of the early representatives of Brazilian culture on a Western musical stage: He made efforts to incorporate national elements into his compositions (albeit in a limited way), and he strongly promoted the use of Portuguese in chamber songs, in lieu of French or Italian. He also taught or supported some yet-to-be known nationalistic composers, such as Luciano Gallet (1893–1931), Oscar Lorenzo Fernández (1897–1948), and—most importantly—Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959).²⁶

Nepomuceno was appointed as the new director of the Instituto Nacional de Música on July 12, 1902.²⁷ He kept writing instrumental music and operas, played numerous concerts, and conducted major works by French, Russian, and Brazilian composers. In 1919, he conducted his last four concerts at the Teatro Municipal and premiered a cello concerto by one of his pupils, Villa-Lobos. Throughout the 1910s, Nepomuceno’s health gradually deteriorated, and he attended a final concert at the Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro on September 23, 1920, where the composer Richard Strauss conducted Nepomuceno’s prelude of the opera *O Garatuja*.²⁸ Nepomuceno passed away at the age of fifty-six in Rio de Janeiro on October 16, 1920.²⁹

Alberto Nepomuceno’s Major Piano Works

The piano played a significant role in the life of Nepomuceno. He took piano lessons since childhood and studied keyboard instruments at every school that he attended. As a pianist himself,

²⁶ Machado, “An Examination of Selected Works,” 30.

²⁷ Riggs, “The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer,” 23.

²⁸ Riggs, 28.

²⁹ “Alberto Nepomuceno Collection and Biography,” Music Division of the Library of Congress.

he even married another pianist. Furthermore, his earliest works were composed for this instrument. Throughout his life, one can observe his dedication to the piano and the gradual maturation of his musical writing.

Among his pianistic output are twenty-three pieces for two hands and several for solo left hand, likely written for his daughter Sigrid. The substantial *Suíte Antiga*, Op. 11 was written in 1893 and was printed at the insistence of Grieg by his own publishers.³⁰ The composition comprises four movements: Prélude, Menuet, Air, and Rigaudon. Each piece portrays one character and a stylized baroque genre. In them, one can sense the impact and reception of J. S. Bach's music during the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth centuries.

Apart from the F-minor piano sonata, the last substantial work I mention is the *Cinco Pequenas Peças* (Five Little Pieces) for the left hand (1906). Again, we can sense that these pieces were composed for his daughter and were intended to be used as educational repertoire. This set opens with a *Barcarola* (Barcarolle), which is then followed by a *Melodia* (melody) and a *Dança* (Dance) with a trio section. The fourth movement is a playful *Brincando* (Playing), and the entire suite ends with a very sweet Polka dance.

³⁰ Vermes, "A produção para piano a duas mãos de Alberto Nepomuceno," 83–84.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF PIANO SONATA IN F MINOR, OP. 9

Nepomuceno's occidentalism is clearest in his compositions of large, Western-European forms. In contrast to the many research papers that have focused on the nationalist aspect of Nepomuceno's output, I pay attention to the works that have more European influence. In this chapter, I discuss this Piano Sonata in F minor as an example of a work which fully embraces the European tradition.

First Movement

The Piano Sonata in F Minor, Op. 9 was composed in Berlin in 1893, and consists of three movements. It was premiered by Nepomuceno himself in Rio de Janeiro at the Instituto Nacional in August 1895. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Nepomuceno's music occasionally used national elements.³¹ However, this sonata in classical form is different: It employs highly traditional European musical forms and languages.

The first movement was conceived in sonata-allegro form. It falls into the "type 3 sonata," based on Hepokoski and Darcy's book entitled *Elements of Sonata Theory*. The second movement is in a sonata form without a development;³² for Hepokoski and Darcy, this form belongs to the "type 1 sonata" category. The third movement is a five-part Rondo. In the pages to follow, I first give a brief overview of each movement—with the aid of formal tables—before then going into further detail about the sonata's topics, including Siciliano rhythm, organ-

³¹ Riggs, "The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer," 28.

³² It is also referred to as "slow-movement sonata form" by Charles Rosen.

inspired features, and baroque elements. Throughout my analysis, I emphasize my thesis that the sonata adopts European qualities and marks Nepomuceno as an occidentalist composer.

Nepomuceno’s occidentalism is demonstrated in his use of Western structures and clear tonal scheme. However, there are some unique features embedded in his music, granting it a rather distinctive sound. I first present an overview of the formal structure of each movement, then discuss characteristic elements and topics found within the entire sonata. The following table provides an explicit formal layout of the first movement, including the key structure and measure numbers (Table 1):

Table 1: Outline of the sonata form of the first movement

	Form	Key	Measure Number
Exposition (1–86)	Primary Space	F minor	1–11
	Transitional Space		11–37
	Secondary Space	A-flat major	38–65
	Closing Space		66–86
Developmental Space (87–183)	Section 1 (Opening material)	B-flat minor	87–102
		G minor	103–119
	Section 2 (Fugato, imitation writing)	C minor	120–149
		E-flat major	150–161
	Transitional Space (Long pedal points)	D-flat minor	162–169
		F minor	170–183
Recapitulatory Space (184–269)	Primary Space	F minor	184–194
	Transitional Space		194–220
	Secondary Space	F major	221–248
	Closing Space		249–269

The first movement is light in texture, and there are two significant motives constantly utilized throughout the movement. The opening theme employs a succession of compound-duple rhythms, starting with a quarter note and two sixteenth notes (Musical Example 1):

Musical Example 1: First movement, mm. 1–4



After a half cadence on the downbeat of m. 11, the piece enters the transitional space, modulating toward the relative major as expected. The rhythmic motive of the transitional space continues the disturbed and agitated mood. It also foreshadows the arrival of the secondary theme, which is dominated by the same dotted rhythm.

The secondary theme is characterized by the dotted Siciliano rhythm, a distinctive rhythmic pattern that is usually set in a slow 6/8 time, and is elegant and pastoral in style.³³ As expected for a classical type 3 sonata, the A-flat-major secondary theme is lyrical, contrasting against the restlessness of the serious and agitated primary theme. It is first presented in chorale style but is still thin in texture (Musical Example 2):

³³ Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, 15.

Musical Example 2: First movement, mm. 36–46

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, starting at measure 36, features a treble clef with a melodic line of eighth notes and a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system, starting at measure 41, shows a treble clef with a melodic line of eighth notes and a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dashed line above the second system indicates an 8-measure repeat sign.

The closing space starts with accompanying octave *ostinati* driving up to the end of the exposition. It also adopts a mixture of triple and duple meters between hands (Musical Example 3):

Musical Example 3: First movement, mm. 66–69

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, starting at measure 66, features a treble clef with a melodic line of eighth notes and a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. A dashed line above the first system indicates an 8-measure repeat sign.

It is notable that Nepomuceno carefully follows the classical tradition of placing a repeat sign at the end of the exposition.

The development section contains more than ninety measures, giving it the most weight in the movement. The development can be divided into three parts: Section 1 is structured around the opening material but travels to various keys, beginning in B-flat minor and eventually moving to G minor in m. 103 (Musical Example 4):

Musical Example 4: First movement, beginning of development, mm. 87–108

87

Measures 87-89: The right hand begins with a melodic line starting on a whole note chord (F#4, C#5, G#5) and moving through a series of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G#4, F#4, E4, D4, C4). The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes (C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3).

90

Measures 90-93: The right hand continues with eighth notes (D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4). The left hand continues with eighth notes (C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3).

94

Measures 94-97: The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes (D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4). The left hand continues with eighth notes (C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3).

98

Measures 98-101: The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes (D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4). The left hand continues with eighth notes (C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3). A dynamic marking of *8^{ma}* is present above the right hand.

102

Measures 102-105: The right hand has a melodic line with eighth notes (D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4). The left hand continues with eighth notes (C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3).



The second section is developed via imitation. It begins with the first rhythmic theme in left-hand octaves, then the right hand enters a fifth above the previous subject. Later, the composer mingles them together and expands to a sequential and virtuosic passage.

The third part of the development embodies almost one-page-long pedal points in the left hand, while the right hand plays with the second rhythmic motive, the Siciliano figure. The primary theme is brought back to the home key at m. 184.

Unlike other classical recapitulatory spaces—in which the music tends to stay in the same key for the rest of the movement—Nepomuceno chooses to set the secondary theme in its parallel major (Musical Example 5):

Musical Example 5: First movement, mm. 222–225



A similar compositional technique can be found in the first movement of Schubert's C-minor Sonata, D. 958, where he moves his secondary theme to C major in the recapitulation. This parallel-major recapitulation often appears in sonatas of the Romantic period, such as in the first movement of Chopin's B-minor sonata, where the recap's secondary theme is set in B major.

Ultimately, the entire first movement of Nepomuceno’s sonata concludes triumphantly on three large F-major chords. The minor-mode movement starts with a gloomy atmosphere, which is then subverted through the appearance of the major mode. As Hepokoski and Darcy’s book states, this transformation from a minor to a major mode provides an optimistic and positive change of mood for the music.³⁴

Second Movement

The second movement is in the key of the subdominant, B-flat major. One might expect the second movement to be in the relative key, A-flat major; but the subdominant second movement is also a common choice for a classical sonata, being a mainstay for Mozart.³⁵ Nepomuceno’s second movement is without a development, marking it as a “type 1 sonata.” The opening melodic line—with a tempo of *andante espressivo*—conveys a sense of peace and calm. The following table provides a detailed formal structure for the second movement (Table 2):

Table 2: Outline of the sonata form without development, second movement

	Section	Key	Measure Number
Exposition (1–31)	Primary Space	B-flat major	1–16
	Secondary Space	G minor	16–26
	Transition		27–31
Recapitulatory Space (32–49)	Primary Space	B-flat major	32–39
	Secondary Space	B-flat minor	39–43
	Transition		44–49
Coda (50–60)		B-flat minor	50–60

³⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 306.

³⁵ Arthur Berger, *Reflections of an American Composer* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 60. For instance, the middle movements of Mozart’s Piano Sonatas K. 311 and K. 332 are set in subdominant keys.

In the primary space, the beginning melody is represented in octaves; the upward stems differentiate the theme from the other voices. The contour of the primary theme consists mostly of stepwise descending motion and repeated notes that take part in 2–3 suspensions with the other right-hand voice; the use of upward leaps allows Nepomuceno to restart the descending motion (Musical Example 6):

Musical Example 6: Second movement, mm. 1–6

Andante espressivo



The musical score for Musical Example 6 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system shows measures 1 through 4, and the second system shows measures 4 through 6. The music is in 4/4 time and G minor. The right hand features a descending eighth-note melody with upward stems, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. The tempo is marked 'Andante espressivo'.

The transition to secondary space is fairly smooth and subtle. The music flows to G minor as the melody begins to accelerate. Instead of steady and slow quarter notes, Nepomuceno adds many eighth notes that shape the music more dramatically. The secondary space has ten measures, which can be equally divided into two parts. The first five measures state the new theme in G minor, whereas the second half modulates to D minor (Musical Example 7):

Musical Example 7: Second movement, mm. 16–21



The musical score for Musical Example 7 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system shows measures 16 through 18, and the second system shows measures 18 through 21. The music is in 4/4 time and G minor. The right hand features a descending eighth-note melody with upward stems, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. The tempo is marked 'Andante espressivo'.

Unlike the steady rhythm that begins the movement, the reappearance of the primary space employs triplet rhythms underneath the melody. Among other things, this change makes the music sound faster and more unstable, which foreshadows the diminution in length of both primary and secondary spaces. The primary space is shortened to eight bars, and it immediately moves to the secondary space in B-flat minor. Notably, the secondary theme is now set on a downbeat rather than a pickup measure (Musical Example 8):

Musical Example 8: Second movement, mm. 31–42

34

37

40

The coda starts at m. 50, mixing themes from primary and secondary spaces. It begins with the melodic material from the opening theme but in its parallel minor key. Additionally, it is now set on offbeats, above a B-flat pedal tone. The ending of the coda is drawn from the secondary space, and the whole movement evaporates in an ascending line and ends in the minor mode (Musical Example 9):

Musical Example 9: Second movement, mm. 49–60

49

Intriguingly, this change mirrors the minor-major shift of the first movement. The final movement, however, is far more predictable in its tonal boundaries, starting and ending in F minor.

Third Movement

This third and final movement is a five-part rondo, back in the key of F minor, and set in 6/8 time. The refrain theme is in a small ternary form, which is common in classical music. For instance, the scherzo movement of Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 3 in C major, Op. 2, is in a small ternary form. It is also referred to as ABA' form. As shown in Table 3, the formal structure follows the standard Western classical tradition, with the main theme returning to the tonic key of F minor after contrasting sections written in different keys (Table 3):

Table 3: Outline of the rondo form, third movement

Section	Form	Key	Measure Number
A (1–58)	a	F minor	1–17
	b	C major	17–35
	a'	F minor	36–58
B (59–81)		A-flat major	59–81
A (82–108)	a	F minor	82–98
	b'	C major	98–108
C (109–141)		C major	109–139
Retransition (142–163)			140–163
A (164–217)	a	F minor	164–180
	b''	C major	180–194
	b'''	F minor	194–217

The grandiose opening of this last movement features fast and determined octaves in both hands (Musical Example 10):

Musical Example 10: Third movement, mm. 1–8

Allegro con spirito

The musical score for Musical Example 10, Third movement, mm. 1–8, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 1–4) begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic and features a grandiose opening with fast and determined octaves in both hands. The tempo is marked *Allegro con spirito*. The second system (measures 5–8) continues the rhythmic pattern, with the right hand playing a series of eighth-note chords and the left hand playing a steady eighth-note bass line.

The small b section plays with thirds in the melody (Musical Example 11):

Musical Example 11: Third movement, mm. 17–20



The manner of writing in mm. 22–23 bears a striking resemblance to the first movement's transitional space. The bass notes move up by step while the right hand alternates between octaves and single eighth notes (Musical Example 12):

Musical Example 12: Comparison of first and third movement

Third movement, mm. 21–23



First movement, mm. 51–55



The B section is composed in a more lyrical choral style, as opposed to the bold writing that characterizes the A section. It contains the similar contrasting feeling as found in the first movement. The melody begins with an ascending third in A-flat major, and the music becomes

more relaxed. Its overall mood and key are similar to that of the secondary space of the first movement (Musical Example 13):

Musical Example 13: Third movement, mm. 70–76

Musical score for Musical Example 13, measures 69–76. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). It consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 69–72) shows a right-hand melody with eighth and quarter notes and a left-hand accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes. The second system (measures 73–76) continues the melody and accompaniment, with some notes beamed together in the right hand.

The refrain returns at m. 82, leading to the C section in C major at m. 109. It is again set in choral four-part writing, with constant dotted-quarter notes and leaps in the soprano line. It shares many qualities with the B section, though it is longer (Musical Example 14):

Musical Example 14: Third movement, mm. 109–114

Musical score for Musical Example 14, measures 109–114. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of three sharps (F# major or C# minor). It consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 109–114) shows a right-hand melody with dotted-quarter notes and eighth notes, and a left-hand accompaniment with dotted-quarter notes and eighth notes. The second system (measures 118–124) continues the melody and accompaniment, with some notes beamed together in the right hand. The score includes first and second endings for the final measure of the first system.

The retransition begins at m. 140, with the left hand playing arpeggiated diminished-seventh chords in an ascending motion, while the right hand takes over and plays descending chromatic scales in octaves. It gives a sense of uncertainty and turbulence to the ears. Finally, both hands meet together and play the descending chromatic scale, leading to the refrain. The entire work ends dramatically in F minor, after a series of chords alternating between V6/5 and i.

Musical Topics

In this section, I illustrate Nepomuceno's use of musical topics, certain gestures that recall a specific musical or extramusical idea. In the cases presented below, Nepomuceno's topics relate to his Brazilian occidental style (use of Siciliano rhythm), his identity as an organist (use of organ-style writing), or his kinship with baroque music (use of baroque elements).

Siciliano Rhythm

It is clear now that Nepomuceno uses Western musical forms throughout this sonata, as argued above. However, there are significant musical features which make this sonata unique. The first aspect is his use of Siciliano rhythm, which provides support for Nepomuceno's European and international affiliation.

Siciliano rhythm is not an attribute of Brazilian folk music. Instead, it is part of the larger baroque pastoral style. In the Baroque period, it is often set in 6/8 or 12/8 time and in a slow tempo, with a stepwise and singing melodic line. The Siciliano topic is defined by a number of characteristics that are presented throughout the entire first movement. It is first used in a transitional space at m. 21. Then, it completely occupies the subsequent lyrical secondary theme,

which is in A-flat major, with a choral setting. It appears in the development and recapitulation as well (Musical Example 15):

Musical Example 15: First movement, secondary theme of recapitulation, mm. 221–230

The Organ Topic

Given the fact that Nepomuceno studied organ while he was staying in Europe, this sonata naturally captures this style and carries it throughout all three movements. In the first movement, the left-hand accompaniment patterns are mostly comprised of octaves, chords, and long pedal points. Those figurations consistently appear in primary spaces, closing spaces, and the end of the developmental space. For instance, the third section of the development entails an almost one-page-long series of pedal points in the left hand, while the right hand plays with the second rhythmic motive (Musical Example 16):

Musical Example 16: First movement, development, mm. 163–174

163

(8va)

166

(8va)

169

(8va)

172

Organ effects can also be found in the second and third movements, with both the melody and accompaniment being presented in octaves. The coda of the second movement features a long pedal point on B-flat, held for seven measures. At the end of the third movement, the music

is developed from the previous rhythmic motive of alternating quarter notes and eighth notes, accompanied by the C pedal point in the left hand for twelve measures (Musical Example 17):

Musical Example 17: Third movement, mm. 199–210

Musical score for Musical Example 17, Third movement, mm. 199–210. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It consists of four systems of two staves each. The first system starts at measure 197 and ends at 200. The second system starts at measure 201 and ends at 204. The third system starts at measure 205 and ends at 208. The fourth system starts at measure 209 and ends at 210. The right hand plays chords and moving lines, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment with a C pedal point. Performance markings include '8va' and '8vb' with dashed lines indicating octave transpositions.

Baroque Elements

While the sonata is structured largely using classical forms, its themes can be seen to derive from baroque models. For instance, the punctuated nature of the opening theme's quarter

notes and sixteenth notes (Musical Example 18) conveys a distinctly fugal gesture, akin to the theme of Bach's F-minor fugue from Book II of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Musical Example 19). This feeling is amplified by Nepomuceno's octave doubling between the hands.

Musical Example 18: First movement, mm. 1–4



Musical Example 19: J. S. Bach, fugue in F minor, BWV 881, mm. 1–3



Both pieces are in F minor. The main melodic notes are C, F, D-flat, and E-natural, which outline an F-minor chord and E-diminished seventh chord. Many fugal subjects in the Baroque period start with a tonic chord and are then followed by a diminished chord. This fact, along with other compositional qualities, underscores Nepomuceno's internalization of baroque style.

Furthermore, the fugal sound of Nepomuceno's theme is borne out by the fact that the theme does eventually transform into an imitation in the development of the first movement.

The fugal subject begins with the first rhythmic motive in left-hand octaves, then the right hand enters a fifth higher to present the fugal answer (Musical Example 20):

Musical Example 20: First movement, mm. 120–138

119

123

127

131

135

In mm. 120–162, the composer alternates the subject entrances between hands, expanding the music into a sequential and virtuosic passage. The use of bold, fugal octaves is quite

reminiscent in the opening octaves of Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy in C major (Musical Example 21):

Musical Example 21: Schubert, Wanderer Fantasy in C major D. 760, mm. 1–18

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's Wanderer Fantasy in C major, measures 1-18. The score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time. It begins with the tempo marking 'Allegro' and the dynamic marking 'ff'. The music is characterized by a strong rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the bass line, with the right hand providing harmonic support. The key signature is C major. The score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

The lack of dynamics in the second movement is quite unconventional for the nineteenth century, suggesting once again that Nepomuceno is being guided by baroque sensibilities, as compositions written in the Baroque period are often seen without dynamic markings.

Lastly, there are many choral and hymn-like passages in this sonata. Towards the end of the first movement, Nepomuceno employs a series of iv six-four chords, which turns into a proper plagal cadence that arrives on the penultimate measure. This closing harmonic plagal cadence and the homophonic texture in the accompaniment both convey a religious quality (Musical Example 22):

Musical Example 22: First movement, mm. 260–269

F minor: iv6/4 iv6/4 iv I I

Moreover, the C section in the rondo movement is set in a light chorale style (Musical Example 23):

Musical Example 23: Third movement, mm. 109–124

Impact of Brahms on Nepomuceno's Piano Writing

Finally, the European musical impact of this sonata is revealed by its resemblance to Brahms' style of piano writing. Nepomuceno studied composition with Herzogenberg in Berlin,

who was a close friend of Johannes Brahms and an advocate of his music.³⁶ It is possible that Nepomuceno became familiar with the music of Brahms through this connection. At certain moments of this sonata, I perceive a distinct similarity with several works by Brahms.

Octave and chordal writing are both ubiquitous in the nineteenth century, but are especially prevalent in Brahms' piano works, such as in the Intermezzi, Op. 117 and the Klavierstücke, Op. 118. This Nepomuceno's sonata is replete with similar octaves and chords. For instance, consider the beginning of the second movement: It features a melody set in octaves with an additional accompaniment line in the right hand. The similar texture can be found in the opening of Brahms' Intermezzo, Op. 117, No. 1 (Musical Example 24):

Musical Example 24: Comparison of second movement and Brahms' Intermezzo

Second movement, mm. 1–6

Andante espressivo

Brahms, Intermezzo in E-flat major, Op. 117, No. 1, mm. 1–4

Andante moderato

p dolce

³⁶ Riggs, "The Brazilian Art Song and the Non-Brazilian Portuguese Singer," 14.

More notably, hemiola (or the superposition of double and triple divisions of the measure) is another characteristic trait in the music of Brahms.³⁷ For instance, towards the end of the first movement of Brahms' first sonata for violin and piano in G major, Op. 78, the 6/4 meter alternates between a duple and triple grouping (Musical Example 25):

Musical Example 25: Brahms, Violin Sonata in G Major, first movement, mm. 233–239

In a similar fashion, the first movement of Nepomuceno's sonata commences with a mixture of triple and duple meters between hands. Specifically, the right hand performs an illusory 3/4 time against the piece's native 6/8 time signature (Musical Example 26):

Musical Example 26: First movement, mm. 66–69

³⁷ Hemiolas are also frequent in Latin-American folk music.

In the third movement, the composer plays with hemiolas at m. 22 and m. 23, where the six beats are divided into three groups of two eighth notes (Musical Example 27):

Musical Example 27: Third movement, mm. 21–23



Compositional similarities between Brahms and Nepomuceno abound, especially if one considers Brahms Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5, written in 1853. For instance, the fifth and last movement is an F-minor rondo in 6/8 time, with repetitive rhythmic figures. Additionally, the second episode—also labeled as a C section in a rondo form—is set in chorale style in a major key. With the mutual acquaintance of Herzogenberg, as well as the many similar musical gestures shared between the two, a strong argument can be made for Nepomuceno’s interest in Brahms’ style of composition.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Alberto Nepomuceno was a composer, educator, conductor, and one of the early cultural figures who advocated for the creation of a specifically Brazilian type of classical music. As the only piano sonata written by Nepomuceno, the F-minor sonata is a stimulating and invigorating choice for pianists interested in his work. Today, it is mostly unknown, with multiple factors having led to its neglect, including the predilection toward European music, the fact that Nepomuceno's works were soon considered too international and not national enough, and the fact that his compositions were dwarfed by those of his more famous student, Villa-Lobos. Furthermore, most Nepomuceno scholars typically focus on his non-pianistic output, as well as his biography.

Nepomuceno's compositions integrate the classical forms of traditional Western music with his background in organ performance. Throughout the sonata, one can evidently discern that Nepomuceno had a solid schooling in both classical forms and traditional baroque elements. He adapted himself to them, but also infused them with his own understanding and innovations. He studied organ in Berlin, so he naturally incorporated the sound of the instrument into his piano composition. Characteristics like these support the interpretation of Nepomuceno's music as occidentalist.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, Nepomuceno follows the conventional sonata construction in many respects. The formal structure of the F-minor sonata is characteristic of the classical tradition, as he utilizes the most archetypal form for each movement: type 3 for movement 1, type 1 for movement 2, and five-part rondo for movement 3. However, within the models of these forms, Nepomuceno incorporated his own touches, some of which are conditioned

by his training as an organist: The first movement incorporates the Siciliano topic, imitative writing, and ostinato patterns; The second movement is written with no dynamics, starts with a major key but ends in minor, and is set as a melody with a simple accompaniment; The last movement employs ternary form, hemiolas, and chorale writing. Meanwhile, all three movements are full of organ-like pedal points, contrasts of extreme registers, and octave doublings. These musical elements create a unique auditory experience, both for the performer and audience.

Nepomuceno drew much inspiration external to his Brazilian geographic and historical surroundings. In some cases, specific sources of influence can be traced; for instance, he had studied in Berlin with Herzogenberg, who was a close friend of Brahms, a composer whose music often contains these classical and baroque styles and elements.

As one of the first dissertations in English deeply exploring Nepomuceno's piano music, this study will help musicians understand Alberto Nepomuceno's piano sonata, and his musical style in general. It is my wish that more pianists give attention to this lesser-known composer. Not only does Nepomuceno write outstanding art songs, but his piano output is worth discovering and performing as well. Even if this sonata lacks recognizably Brazilian qualities, it is nevertheless distinctive in its nineteenth-century take on baroque and classical idioms.

Due to the lack of articulations, phrasing ties, pedaling, and dynamic markings on the current edition, the interpretation of this work is left wide open, offering the interpreter complete freedom in their decisions in a concert performance. This systematic analysis can provide concrete practical insights to the interpretation of this work and enlighten pianists interested in studying and performing this sonata in the future.

Ultimately, a study on a leading composer in Brazilian concert music of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries can be used to facilitate future research into the works of similar

Latin American composers and their characteristics. It seems questionable to argue that Latin American music is valuable only when it uses folk idioms; most of the concert music produced in the continent in fact lacks any popular references. Nepomuceno's sonata proves that plain Western-style music written in Brazil could be as valuable as any folk-inspired composition.

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