

Francisco Valle

"Do remember that geniuses do not fulfill their careers as easily as one thinks. On the contrary, in most cases, they die unknown and are only acclaimed after their bones have been reduced to ash."

Letter from Francisco Valle to his father
(Paris, January 5, 1889)

Francisco Magalhães do Valle was born on March 20, 1869 in the district of Porto das Flores, then part of the city of Juiz de Fora (MG), at the Fazenda São Joaquim, which belonged to his maternal grandfather, Lieutenant Francisco Ribeiro Magalhães (?-1890). He began his studies with his father, the flautist Manuel Marcelino do Valle (1839-1903), and later became a piano student of Elisa Schmidt and Wilhelm Bickerle. According to his biographer Américo Pereira, Francisco Valle began to compose at age fourteen and moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1885, where he studied piano with Alfredo Bevilacqua (1846-1927) and harmony with Miguel Cardoso (1850-1912). His colleagues in the study of harmony were Sílvio Deolindo Fróis (1865-1948) and Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920). His first works, written under the guidance of Miguel Cardoso, were the *Sonata in C minor* (C-FV 19) and the *Mazurca Sentimental* (C-FV 10). An unnamed critic of the day, quoted by Américo Pereira, registered in the magazine *A Vida Moderna* his impressions of a presentation by Francisco Valle that took place on July 17, 1886 in a salon of the carioca elite of the Belle Époque: "A revolution [...] in the arts, that's what it is. [...] I had the occasion to admire a petit prodige. [...] That night I heard and admired a Sonata in the manner of Beethoven, and a

most original and inspired Mazurca, full of delicious surprises, with a notable delicacy of composition and style."

It was in that year of 1886, indeed, that Francisco Valle began to make a name as a pianist. In August he appeared at the Club Beethoven in Rio de Janeiro and in September at the Industrial Exposition in Juiz de Fora. His concert for Princess Isabel at the Palace of São Cristóvão, also in September, earned him a letter of introduction to Emperor Pedro II, who was in Paris at the time. Encouraged by his rapid ascent, he left for France in September 1887. Financial support came chiefly from his maternal grandfather, but there is no doubt that he also called on the assistance of various friends in order to make ends meet. Living modestly in the capital, he was an auditor at the Paris Conservatory, studied piano with Charles-Wilfrid Bériot (1833-1914) and organ with Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), but most important for his training were the private lessons he received from César Franck (1822-1890) who, knowing the financial straits of the young Valle, reduced the price of his lessons by half.

During his stay in Paris, Francisco Valle met again with his Brazilian colleague Deolindo Fróis, as well as the composers Alexandre Levy (1864-1892) and

Francisco Braga (1868-1945), who were also studying there. Sílvio Fróis, in a letter dated 1938, left important information about Valle's activities and his friendship with André Dulaurens (1873-1932) and Charles Tournemire (1870-1939), including the following remark: "*Tournemire had an excellent opinion of him [Valle], just as César Franck considered him to be one of his most talented disciples, and the same was the case with Widor.*"

Valle's return to Brazil was brought about by unfortunate circumstances. The death of his grandfather in 1890 had left his family in a difficult financial situation. The letters exchanged between Valle and his father reveal that the latter, at the end of the eighteen-nineties, even considered selling the family estate. In a letter dated May 3, 1891, Francisco Valle admitted that he could no longer remain in Paris. According to Fróis, he returned to Brazil with a third class ticket, refusing financial assistance from his peers. What is most notable in these letters is Valle's awareness that his studies had not been completed: "*Certainly an artist is not trained in three years and some, but I believe that my time was not wasted.*"

Having arrived in Brazil with important compositions under his belt, Valle hoped to receive a grant from the government of Minas Gerais, though this was never forthcoming. In the aforementioned letter of May 3, 1891, he wrote to his father as follows: "*The most important thing for us now is to look for a way for me to finish my studies: since I am a son of Juiz de Fora, I entertain hopes of earning a grant from the province of Minas [Gerais], so that I can return [to Europe] after a few months, in order to carry on with my career.*" On August 30, 1891, Valle organized a concert at the Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara, in Rio de Janeiro. The program featured his earliest orchestral works: *Pastoral* (C-FV 13b), *Telêmaco* (C-FV 22; PAMM 16), *Valse-Scherzo* (C-FV 25; PAMM 14), and *Réverie* (C-FV 18a). *Telêmaco* (subtitled "Symphonic Scenes"), composed in the style of the Romantic symphonic poems, was the largest-scale work written by Valle up until that point. The *Pastoral* was apparently written for piano in Brazil (C-FV 13a), and later orchestrated in Paris, while *Valse-Scherzo* was probably composed in Paris, to judge from the annotations in French on the autograph manuscript. *Réverie*, on the other hand, is only extant in a version for piano solo (C-FV 18b). Other works composed up to that time, such as the *Minueto Capricho* (C-FV 11a) for eight instruments, exhibit a clear influence of Beethoven. Valle certainly knew the music of Beethoven before traveling to Europe, so much so that he alluded to it in his *Sonata in C minor* (C-FV 19). However, he probably became better acquainted with the German composer during his studies in France, applying his knowledge of Beethoven's music in some of his subsequent works.

In Brazil, Francisco Valle spent a short time giving piano lessons at *fazendas* in the region of Juiz de Fora. In 1894 he married Maria da Conceição Coimbra; they had three children before she died in 1903. One year after his wedding, Francisco Valle moved to Rio de Janeiro, where

he made a living as a piano teacher. His works continued to be performed, for example, in a concert organized by Carlos Gomes (1836-1896) and Vincenzo Cernicchiaro (1858-1928) at the Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara, in October 1893, as well as in a successful concert that he himself promoted at the Clube Sinfônico, in August 1895. In 1896 he was named honorary member of the council of the Instituto Nacional de Música, and participated in juries at that institution. A neurological disorder forced him to return to Juiz de Fora in October 1899. After recovering, Valle married Petrina Leal, with whom he had his fourth child.

The early years of the Republic witnessed various political coups, such as the Naval Revolt, the *Encilhamento*, the Federalist Revolution and the Canudos Rebellion. Francisco Valle's output during this period, judging by the titles of his works and by Américo Pereira's commentaries, reflect the political happenings of the day. One example is the symphonic poem entitled *Depois da Guerra* (C-FV 05), inspired by the Naval Revolt (1893-1894), which was presented in Rio de Janeiro, in 1897, under the direction of Alberto Nepomuceno. In 1900 Valle wrote the *Hino* (C-FV 08) celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the Discovery of Brazil. It was also in 1900 that he presented, at the Teatro Novelli in Juiz de Fora, a number of his recent works, including the two-piano version of *Bailado na Roça* (C-FV 02a; PAMM 15), which was inspired by popular Brazilian themes and included a "Samba" in the finale. Although the piece reflects an absolutely European and idealized view of Brazilian folklore, Valle carried out other experiments in this field, being known, as was the custom at the time, as a "folklorist." In 1905, the composer delivered a lecture in Juiz de Fora and illustrated it with a series of variations for piano on the well-known theme *Vem cá Bitu* (C-FV 26), which over the course of the twentieth century came to be sung to the poem *Cai, cai balão*.

In 1906, Valle wrote his last completed work, *O Batel da Dor* (C-FV 03), for two pianos, probably inspired by the tragic shipwreck of the *Aquidaban*. It is another set of variations, but larger and more sophisticated than *Vem cá Bitu*. In the same year, on October 10, Francisco Valle could no longer resist the symptoms of a recurring neurasthenic anxiety and threw himself into the Paraíba River. His body was found only several days later. The renowned critic José Rodrigues Barbosa, in a text published in 1922, but probably written several years earlier, wrote as follows about the composer's last days:

Francisco Valle arrived in Rio de Janeiro suffering, once again, from a strong neurasthenia. He entrusted his symphonic poem Telêmaco to maestro Alberto Nepomuceno, so that it could be performed in the popular concerts, but was not able to hear the piece. On the morning of the performance he returned to Juiz de Fora, where his illness continued to torment him considerably.

Francisco Valle received brief mentions in the histories of Brazilian music published by Guilherme de Mello (1908), José Rodrigues Barbosa (1922), Renato Almeida (1926 and 1942), Vincenzo Cernicchiaro (1926), Francisco Acquarone (1948), and Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo (1956), but began to disappear from publications of a more general nature beginning in the sixties. His most important biographer was the above-mentioned teacher, doctor, and writer Américo Pereira, who had a small leaflet about the composer printed in 1923, a source for several of the books mentioned above, as well as an article that was even shorter, but published in the prestigious *Revista Brasileira de Música*, in 1938. But the chief work by Américo Pereira was a book published in 1962, the most complete biographical source on the composer, which was particularly important for the present survey of Francisco Valle's compositions.

In all likelihood, Valle's archive was initially preserved by relatives, but this probably did not prevent various documents from disappearing already in the first half of the twentieth century. There is evidence that, at some point, this archive was also in the possession of Oscar Guanabara (1851-1937) and of Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), or at least that it was consulted by them. The former even prepared a list of Valle's compositions based on this material.² In unknown circumstances, but probably in the twenties, Américo Pereira became the owner of a substantial portion of the documents. This probably motivated him to write his three aforementioned publications on Valle. After the death of Américo Pereira, his daughter located the material and altruistically returned it to the Valle family, contacting, via telephone, the writer, poet, and academic Alberto Valle, a distant cousin of the maestro, who resided in Niterói (RJ).

Lacking close contacts with the musical community, Alberto Valle appealed to his nephew living in São Paulo, Cyro Valle, who began a long search for musicians who might be able to advise him about what ought to be done with the archive. The trail finally led him to Lúcius Mota, in Tatuí (SP), who in 2003 contacted Paulo Castagna in São Paulo, giving rise to the group that began discussions on the fate of the documentation guarded by Alberto Valle and Cyro Valle. It was thus that on June 15, 2005, at the Teatro Procópio Ferreira,

students of the Conservatório de Tatuí, under the guidance of Lúcius Mota, performed the *Minueto Capricho* (C-FV 11a), working from manuscripts of the Arquivo Francisco Valle. This initiative stimulated larger-scale projects, notably the inclusion of the composer in the present volume and the donation of the archive to the Arquivo Público Mineiro in Belo Horizonte, thus guaranteeing its preservation and availability to the musical and musicological community. Also indicative of this new phase of interest in the composer was the performance of the orchestral version of *Bailado na Roça* (C-FV 02b), on July 28, 2007, at the closing of the XVIII Festival Internacional de Música Colonial Brasileira e Música Antiga do Centro Cultural Pró-Música de Juiz de Fora, by the Orquestra Colonial do Festival, in the Cine-Teatro Central.

At the same time, a small quantity of manuscripts was unearthed at the Biblioteca Alberto Nepomuceno of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Considering the passage of the composer through Rio de Janeiro and the fact that Nepomuceno himself directed some of his works, it is not surprising that these compositions, some of them autographs, had been kept in the library of the former Instituto Nacional de Música. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the librarian at the time, Guilherme de Mello (1867-1932), cataloged four pieces by Valle, one of which, *O Batel da Dor*, was not found there, but is extant at the Arquivo Francisco Valle. Finally, two printed piano scores, *Mazurca Sentimental op.1* (C-FV 10) and *Prelúdio op.3, n.2* (C-FV 14), were located respectively at the Biblioteca do Instituto de Artes of the Universidade Estadual Paulista and the Divisão de Música e Arquivo Sonoro of the Biblioteca Nacional.

A list of Francisco Valle's compositions is provided in table 1. Comparing the works lists published thus far, especially the one by Américo Pereira (that incorporates Oscar Guanabara's index), with the actual manuscripts and prints located in the above-cited repositories, it is clear that at least nine of Valle's works (or different versions of a given work) are currently lost (marked with an asterisk). The listing below does not include seven other pieces, at the Arquivo Francisco Valle, which bear no authorship, nor does it mention Valle's transcriptions for organ and piano of music by Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann:³

² "Oscar Guanabara published, in the *feuilleton* *Pelo Mundo das Artes* of the *Jornal do Comércio*, on June 13, 1823, a list of maestro Valle's music that he had received from Dr. João Valle. It included the *Suíte n.3, for strings (Allegretto and Finale)*; *Regina cæli, for solo voice, accompanied by a small orchestra*; and *Mistérios, a nocturne, for piano*. These works are currently missing, as well as *Prelúdios, for piano*, and *Rêverie, for orchestra, a piece performed in 1891, at Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara*." See: PEREIRA, Américo. *O maestro Francisco Valle: ensaio crítico-biográfico*. Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, 1962. p.121-122.

³ See: PEREIRA, Américo. op. cit., 1962. p.60-61.

WORKS	Table 1							
	ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS				CATALOGUES			
	AFV	BAN	BIA	BNRJ	GM	AP	EMB	
C-FV 01 <i>Antes no Céu</i> Version for piano (original for chorus?)	•					•	•	
C-FV 02a* <i>Bailado na Roça</i> - 1900 Characteristic piece Version for two pianos						•		
C-FV 02b <i>Bailado na Roça</i> - 1906 Characteristic piece or symphonic suite Version for orchestra		•			•	•	•	
C-FV 03 <i>O Batel da Dor</i> Funereal theme and six variations Two pianos	•				•	•	•	
C-FV 04 <i>Canção Infernal</i> Version for piano (original for chorus?)	•					•	•	
C-FV 05 <i>Depois da Guerra</i> Symphonic poem Orchestra		•			•	•	•	
C-FV 06 <i>Domine, Gloria Patri e Veni</i> Three voices and instruments	•					•		
C-FV 07 <i>Feliz!</i> Version for piano (original for chorus?)	•					•		
C-FV 08a <i>Hino do IV Centenário Brasileiro</i> Original version, for voice, band, and orchestra	•					•		
C-FV 08b <i>Hino do IV Centenário Brasileiro</i> Reduction for voice and piano	•							
C-FV 08c <i>Hino do IV Centenário Brasileiro</i> Reduction for piano four hands	•							
C-FV 09 <i>Hino Infantil</i> Voice and piano	•							
C-FV 10 <i>Mazurca Sentimental op.1</i> - 1886 Piano Edition: Irmãos Vitale [c.1939] (as op.10)			•			•	•	
C-FV 11a <i>Minueto Capricho</i> - 1892 Original version, for octet	•					•	•	
C-FV 11b* <i>Minueto Capricho</i> - 1892 Reduction for piano four hands						•	•	
C-FV 12* <i>Mistérios</i> Nocturne Piano						•		
C-FV 13a <i>Pastoral</i> - 1884 Version for two pianos	•					•		
C-FV 13b <i>Pastoral</i> - 1891 Version for orchestra		•			•		•	
C-FV 14 <i>Prelúdio op.3 n.2</i> - 1891 Piano Edition: Casa Bevilacqua				•		•	•	
C-FV 15* <i>Prelúdios</i> Piano						•		
C-FV 16 <i>Recordação</i> Piano	•							
C-FV 17* <i>Regina cæli</i> Voice and small orchestra						•		
C-FV 18a* <i>Rêverie</i> - 1891 Version for orchestra						•		

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WORKS	ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS				CATALOGUES		
	AFV	BAN	BIA	BNRJ	GM	AP	EMB
C-FV 18b <i>Rêverie</i> Version for piano	•						
C-FV 19* <i>Sonata in C minor</i> - 1886 Piano						•	•
C-FV 20 <i>Sonatina in C minor</i> Violin and piano	•						
C-FV 21 <i>Suite</i> - 1892 Sextet	•					•	•
C-FV 22 <i>Telêmaco</i> - 1891 Symphonic scenes Orchestra	•					•	•
C-FV 23* <i>Tota pulchra</i> Chorus and orchestra?						•	
C-FV 24* <i>Última Canção</i> Berceuse Voice and piano						•	•
C-FV 25 <i>Valse-Scherzo</i> - 1891 Orchestra	•					•	•
C-FV 26 <i>Variações sobre “Vem cá Bitu”</i> - 1905 Piano	•						
C-FV 27 <i>Visão ou Perseguição</i> Piano	•					•	•
C-FV 28 <i>Zélia</i> Voice and piano	•					•	

Continuing research will certainly uncover other sources, or even new works. Flausino Vale remarked, in 1948, that “*having resided in Juiz de Fora, he [Valle] used to go often to Barbacena, where, together with [Manuel Joaquim de] Macedo, he gave lessons to the daughters of the late Dr. Carlos de Sá Fortes. Dr. Fortes is the owner of the splendid fazenda that exists to this today. [...] At this fazenda there are unknown autographs by Francisco Valle, among them the Naufrágio do Aquidaban, for two pianos [probably C-FV 03].*”

In order to understand the meaning and the importance of Valle’s contribution, it is important to view it in the context of musical romanticism in Brazil, which enjoyed its apogee in the last three decades of the nineteenth and the first three decades of the twentieth century. This movement represented the assimilation of French and German compositional models, in place of the predominantly Italo-Portuguese influences on religious music, and of the Italian influence on opera. Chronologically out of phase by almost half a century, these composers initially absorbed the aesthetics personified by the music of Beethoven, Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and other early romantics. Later, they assimilated the contributions of the generation of Franck, Liszt (1811-1886), and Wagner (1813-1883). Regardless of how nationalistic historiography has slighted this

development, it is undeniable that the Brazilians arrived at the turn of the twentieth century with a generation of composers who remarkably mastered the European piano, chamber, and orchestral writing, exhibiting a notable familiarity with the musical language of romanticism.

With the exception of the two aforementioned short pieces for piano (C-FV 10 and 14), no work by Francisco Valle has thus far been printed, let alone recorded. For this reason, he has not been part of Brazilian concert life for more than fifty years. Minas Gerais is chiefly recognized as the cradle of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Church music, but little is known about the romantic production of this period, or about the activities of Valle’s contemporaries, with the exception of Manuel Joaquim de Macedo (1847-1925), born in Cantagalo (RJ), but settled in Minas Gerais from 1883.

In this light, the recovery of the music of Francisco Valle represents not only an act of preservation of the musical heritage of Minas Gerais, but above all the creation of a place for it in modern-day life. It is to be hoped that the transference of the Arquivo Francisco Valle to the Arquivo Público Mineiro, along with the publication of this largely forgotten repertoire, will open the way to the recuperation of other authors, collections, and works, not only in the state of Minas Gerais, but in all of Brazil.

Lúcius Mota
Paulo Castagna
Cyro Eyer do Valle

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