Guerra-Peixe's *Symphony No. 2 Brasília* (Part 1): A Historical Background

Sinfonia No. 2 Brasília de Guerra-Peixe (Parte 1): Antecedentes Históricos

Marcelo Ramos de Souza
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
maestro.marcelo.ramos@gmail.com

Abstract: This article investigates the historical circunstances that led to the composition of *Symphony No. 2 Brasília*, by César Guerra-Peixe, written for symphony orchestra, mixed choir and an optional narrator. The piece was originally composed for a competition organized by the Radio Station of Ministry of Education in 1960 to celebrate the inauguration of the new Brazilian capitol, originating substantial controversy, hence the first prize was not awarded and a tie was registered between three candidates in second place: Guerra-Peixe, Guerra-Vicente, and Claudio Santoro – all of them became renowned composers of Brazilian music. The *Symphony Brasília* by Guerra-Peixe was subject of my doctoral project in three principal fronts: production of a performance edition of the full score and parts; performance of the work in the US and Brazil, aiming to correct eventual mistakes and spread the music; and a production of historical and analytical texts.

Keywords: Guerra-Peixe; *Symphony No. 2 Brasília*; Brazilian music; Brazilian Nationalism.

Resumo: O presente artigo aborda as circunstâncias históricas que culminaram com a composição da obra Sinfonia No. 2 Brasília, de César Guerra-Peixe, escrita para orquestra sinfônica, coro misto e um narrador opcional. A obra foi originalmente composta para um concurso organizado pelo MEC em 1960 para celebrar a inauguração da nova capital do Brasil, gerando uma substancial controvérsia, pois, além de não ter sido outorgado o prêmio de primeiro lugar, houve um empate entre três candidatos no segundo lugar: Guerra-Peixe, Guerra-Vicente e Claudio Santoro – todos eles compositores consagrados da música brasileira atual. A Sinfonia Brasília de Guerra-Peixe foi objeto de minha dissertação de doutorado em três frentes principais: produção de uma edição de performance da partitura completa; execução da obra nos Estados Unidos e no Brasil, com o objetivo de corrigir os eventuais erros e divulgação da obra; e produção de texto histórico e analítico musical.

Palavras-chave: Guerra-Peixe; *Sinfonia No. 2 Brasília*; música brasileira; nacionalismo brasileiro.

1 - Background on the Composer

1.1 – Historical aspects

Born in Petrópolis, State of Rio de Janeiro, in 1914 to a Portuguese family, Guerra-Peixe started his musical instruction at the age of six with his father, playing the mandolin, the violin, and the piano (FARIA, 2000, p.169). He studied composition with Newton de Pádua and later on with Hans Joachim Koellreutter, with whom he solidified a strong knowledge basis in several areas inside and outside music. During this time, he composed most of his chamber works using the twelve-tone technique.

In 1949 he moved to Recife, hired by the radio station Journal of Commerce, aiming to investigate the local folklore of northeastern Brazil. Guerra-Peixe argued that previous and contemporary composers used the folklore in a superficial way, and he wanted to do systematic research on the subject, recording live events of folk manifestations and transcribing rhythms and melodies from these experiences (BARROS, 2007, p.116).

Upon choosing Recife as his new town, the composer refused invitations from Aaron Copland to teach in the United States and from the conductor Hermann Scherchen to live in Zurich (the relationship between Guerra-Peixe and Aaron Copland may be seen in a letter from 1952 – see Figure 1). In Europe, he could have been brought up-to-date with contemporary tendencies in the arts and initiated his career as a conductor, having the Zurich Radio Symphony Orchestra as a lab ensemble (PROJ. GUERRA-PEIXE, 2014). Instead, he insisted on staying in Brazil, believing that he could learn everything he needed there.
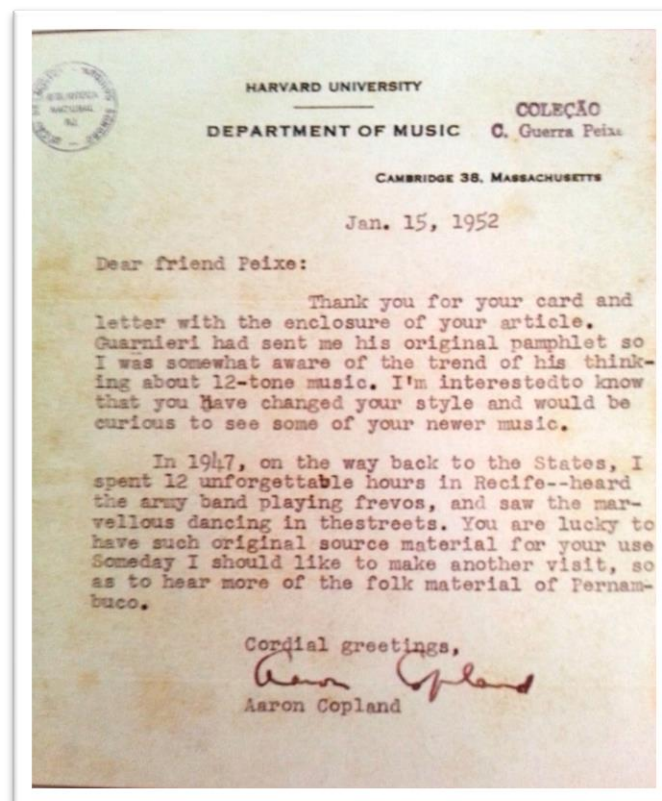

Figure 1. Letter from Aaron Copland to Guerra-Peixe. *Source:* Rio de Janeiro National Library.

He transferred to São Paulo in 1954, and then went back to Rio de Janeiro in 1961. Guerra-Peixe taught violin, music theory, composition, and orchestration in institutions such as Santa Cecília Music School in Petrópolis, University of Minas Gerais, University of Arts in Ribeirão Preto, and Rio de Janeiro University (UFRJ). Guerra-Peixe also conducted the following orchestras (PROJ. GUERRA-PEIXE, 2014): Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo Municipal Theatre Orchestras, University of Minas Gerais Symphony Orchestra, Recife Symphony Orchestra, University of Pará Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra (UFF), and Radio MEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) Chamber Orchestra. Additionally, the composer was a member of the Brazilian Academy of Music, Brazilian Society of Musicology, Brazilian

Association of Folklore, and Brazilian Contemporary Music Society. Guerra-Peixe died on November 26, 1993.

According to Sonia Vieira, Guerra-Peixe was an authentic human being, extremely intelligent and curious, apart from being a careful observer with an incredible capacity to synthesize. These qualities made their way into his music, resulting in a notably eclectic composer, violinist, conductor, pedagogue, arranger, researcher, and folklorist (VIEIRA, 2007, p.47).

1.2 – Guerra-Peixe's output

César Guerra-Peixe (1914-1993) was one of the most important Brazilian composers of his generation, along with Claudio Santoro (1919-1989) (CHASE, 1999, p.34). His musical output includes works for orchestra and chamber orchestra, chamber music for several ensembles, concertinos, suites, and arrangements of Brazilian popular music. His compositions have been played internationally in locations such as the Russian cities of Kiev, Saint Petersburg, Odessa and Moscow, and Hilchenbach in Germany. Pieces by Guerra-Peixe that have received awards include (PROJ. GUERRA-PEIXE, 2014) (see Figure 2):

Museu da Inconfidência	1st prize in the "Competition for the Sesquicentennial of the Brazilian Independence," where Mário Tavares, Henrique Morelembaum, Alceo Bocchino, Renzo Massarani, and Guilherme Schubert were judges	1972
	"Best Symphonic Piece" by the São Paulo Association of Critics of Arts – APCA	1975
Symphony No. 2 Brasília	2nd prize in the Radio MEC Competition	1960
	Prize 'Best of the Year' by the Brazilian Society of Critics / Journal of Brazil Radio Station	1963
	Shell Prize (see Figure 3)	1986

Figure 2. Guerra-Peixe's compositions awards.

Figure 3. Award ceremony for *Symphony No. 2 Brasília* – Shell Prize. *Source:* www.guerrapeixe.com

The list of orchestral works by Guerra-Peixe consists of twenty titles, including works for chamber and symphony orchestra (see Figure 4):

	Work	Phase	Date
1	*Symphony No. 1*	Dodecaphonic	1943
2	*Funeral March and Scherzetto*	Dodecaphonic	1946
3	*Variations*	Dodecaphonic	1947
4	*Instantâneos Sinfônicos No. 1*	Dodecaphonic	1947
5	*Instantâneos Sinfônicos No. 2*	Dodecaphonic	1947
6	*Abertura Solene*	National	1950
7	*Symphonic Suite No. 1*	National	1955
8	*Ponteado*	National	1955
9	*Symphonic Suite No. 2*	National	1955
10	*Little Concerto*	National	1956
11	*Symphony No. 2 "Brasília"*	National	1960
12	*Assimilações*	National	1971
13	*A Retirada da Laguna*	National	1971
14	*Concertino for violin and small orchestra*	National	1972
15	*Suggestions of Choral and Dance*	National	1972
16	*Museu da Inconfidência*	National	1973
17	*Roda de Amigos*	National	1979
18	*O Gato Malhado*	National	1983
19	*Sugestões Poéticas*	National	1991
20	*Tribute to Portinari*	National	1992

Figure 4. Orchestral works by Guerra-Peixe.

1.3 - Compositional style

Guerra-Peixe was truly an advocate for a genuine Brazilian national musical aesthetics. He divided his musical output into three distinct phases in his handwritten catalog: initial — until 1943; dodecaphonic — from 1944 to 1949; and national — from 1950 to 1993 (SERRÃO, 2007, p.64).

After studying composition with Newton de Pádua, in 1945 he joined the group Música Viva, at that time an important advocate of vanguard music. Hans Joachim Koellreutter, a German musician established in Brazil in the 1940s and founder of Música Viva, was Guerra-Peixe's mentor for at least four years (see Figure 5).
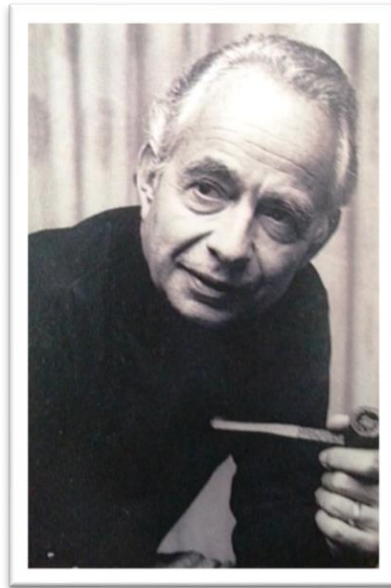
Figure 5. Composer and teacher Hans Joachim Koellreutter. *Source:* Rio de Janeiro National Library.

The musicologist and composer José Maria Neves points out that until around 1940, Brazilian music did not register a real break with the European tradition, lacking intellectual non-conformism. Brazilian composers from the 20th century had been influenced by Stravinsky and by French Impressionism, resulting in a Neoclassical tendency with modal harmony (NEVES, 2008, p.122). Additionally, Brazilian music had not experienced the Post-Romanticism heard in European works by composers like Richard Strauss, Richard Wagner, and Gustav Mahler, maybe because Brazilian orchestras did not have the size or structure for such musical adventure (AGUIAR E, 2007, p.69). One of the most important Brazilian orchestras — Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira — was only founded in 1940 in Rio de Janeiro (MARIZ, 2002, p.91). The natural reaction to European musical tradition could have occurred in 1922 with the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo. The basic goal of the event was the reform of Brazilian art from academicism into Modernist (GROVE ONLINE). Nevertheless, as NEVES analyzes, the Modernism depicted in the event was aesthetically advanced in literature and the arts in general, but notably conservative in music, even considering Villa-Lobos's works.

Due to this lack of reaction, dodecaphonism started in Brazil as an escape effort in minority groups such as Música Viva, and Koellreutter was the intellectual mentor of the new generation of composers in the 1940s. From this time onwards, the titles of compositions display no

programmatic intentions — Música 1942, Variations 1941, etc. — prioritizing pure music, and their content shows no relation with folk music of any kind (NEVES, 2008, p.128).

Guerra-Peixe's experiments with symmetrical series and melodic cells with syncopated rhythms point to a tendency toward "nationalizing the dodecaphonism" (FARIA, 2000, p.170). Or, quoting the composer Edino Krieger, "Guerra-Peixe made an attempt to conciliate the dodecaphonism with a certain Brazilian syntax" (ASSIS, 2007, p.34). Guerra-Peixe used dodecaphonic techniques up to 1949, the year in which he definitely broke with this system. During the same period, the composer Camargo Guarnieri and his brother Rossini published the *Carta Aberta aos Músicos e Críticos do Brasil* (Open Letter to Brazilian Musicians and Critics — see Figure 6), strongly criticizing dodecaphonism, comparing it to the "charlatanism in the science field" (SILVA, 1999, p.195).

Figure 6. Cover of the "Open Letter to Brazilian Musicians and Critics."
Source: Rio de Janeiro National Library.

According to Guerra-Peixe, Koellreutter made him think, discuss, establish aesthetics, and not only write random notes on a pentagram (FARIA, 2007, p.30). He writes, "Koellreutter was very satisfied when I started to disagree with him. He did not force anybody to become a dodecaphonist, but instead, he prepared the information in such a way that it led to it. My initial works in this style do not reveal any intention to nationalize dodecaphonism. My goal was to master the technique" (HORTA, 2007, p.180). They also studied analysis, styles, acoustics, harmony, and serialistic techniques (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p.89). Koellreutter had a notable class of

students, including Guerra-Peixe, Claudio Santoro, Edino Krieger, and the conductors Carlos Alberto Pinto Fonseca, Julio Medaglia, and Isaac Karabtchevsky.

After discontinuing the use of twelve-tone techniques in 1949, Guerra-Peixe moved to Recife, the capitol of Pernambuco in the northeast of Brazil. Unable to use the chromatic series as his harmonic language, the newness of regional modalism appeared to him as a strong option (FARIA, 2007, p.34). He referred to the modalism found in Recife as being "Gregorian," because Mário de Andrade suggested that modalism was introduced in Brazil with the "First Mass" (around year 1500) by the Catholic priests. Faria describes several modes in a manuscript that Guerra-Peixe used to annotate rhythms and scales: nine pentatonic modes, six hexachordal modes, three heptatonic modes, special modes, and others with two, three, and four sounds.

In the broad scope of Guerra-Peixe's compositions, the use of modes was free of stereotyped formulas; he did not use modal triads or typical cadences to characterize a specific mode. Instead, he used foreign notes as a result of the oral and creative tradition of the people who lived within a folk region (FARIA, 2007, p.36). In his examples, sometimes the fourth degree of a given scale was raised, sometimes not. In harmony, the raised fourth degree was often added to a triad to create tension, in the same way that Bártok used the added minor second in several of his works.

Mozart de Araújo (1904-1988), musicologist, professor, and violinist, made substantial contributions in influencing Guerra-Peixe towards a more engaged nationalism. The composer's decision to study the folk music from northeastern Brazil and its utilization as thematic material clearly reflects this influence. Such a turnaround from dodecaphonism to nationalism promoted the concept known as stylization of folklore, meaning a personal version of the folklore "in a broadest way, national, without regionalisms" (FARIA, 2000, p.176). Guerra-Peixe said that his music photographed the folklore in an artistic way. He felt that the source of the sound material should be recognizable by the public, but his music was not intended to copy the folklore (FARIA, 2007, p.39).

The composer mixed and merged in a single composition various elements of the Brazilian culture, from the northeast to the south. For example, in his work *Prelúdio Tropical No. 1*, he mixes a chant originally from the *folia de reis* — folklore from São Paulo and Minas Gerais — with *baião-de-viola* — a folk tradition from the northeast (FARIA, 2007, p.40). Guerra-Peixe used the expressions "direct folklore" and "diluted folklore" to identify pieces of music directly inspired by popular sources or in which the theme was somewhat diluted, respectively (VETROMILLA, 2006, p.91). Concerning the Symphony No. 2 "Brasília," the composer used resources from the "diluted folklore," as will be addressed later.

Guerra-Peixe was a main proponent of the philosophy defended by Brazilian thinker and author Mário de Andrade, in which the use of popular culture fosters a real national style (SILVA, 1999, p.186). They never met, but Andrade represented a major influence in developing the composer's aesthetic ideal. Andrade, in his *Ensaio Sobre a Música Brasileira* (Essay on Brazilian Music), highlighted the importance of the suite as a genre in the creation of Brazilian national music. He designed a guide to the Brazilian suite, which contained *ponteio, cateretê, côco, moda* or *modinha*, *cururu*, and *dobrado* (FARIA, 2007, p.32). Guerra-Peixe added meaning to this list, dividing several rhythms from Brazilian folklore into three categories, arranged by their speed or tempo (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p.97):

- Slow: *aboio, canto de trabalho, encantação, reza de defunto, excelência*
- Medium: *folia de reis, quadrilha, violeiro, pericom, mineiro-pau, cururu*
- Fast: *caboclinhos, baião or baiano, jongo, frevo, xangô, cateretê.*

Andrade also argued that there is no international music; there is Italian music, French music, German music, and so on. Some impose themselves on the others, depending on the era (HORTA, 2007, p.178). A composer who wanted to create international music would naturally fall into one of these schools, as they were well established. In opposition, when choosing to compose national music, a Brazilian composer would have to have at least a social role in his country.

Clayton Vetromilla argues that such aesthetic impulses also correlate to the Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács' ideas, according to notes found in one of Guerra-Peixe's scratch books (VETROMILLA, 2006, p.84). Lukács believed that folk music was a reflection of the man who is close to nature. This, added to Andrade's concept, creates a new dimension in Guerra-Peixe's work. Ruth Serrão observes: "The deep comprehension developed by a methodic study of the folklore of disparate Brazilian regions, allied to a solid compositional technique, opened the shortcuts for the long dreamed liberty of creation; liberty for which Guerra-Peixe longed for since his first contact with the twelve-tone technique." (SERRÃO, 2007, p.67)

1.4 - Guerra Peixe as an orchestrator

Guerra-Peixe never stopped arranging popular songs for several kinds of groups, from duets to whole orchestras, and his orchestration and instrumentation techniques developed extraordinarily in doing so (MIGUEL, 2007, p.15) (see Figure 7). Many testimonies attest to the importance of Brazilian orchestras working for local radio stations, as they provided enriching opportunities for the art of arranging and orchestrating, and solid professional structure for arrangers, copyists, orchestras, and conductors (MIGUEL, 2007, p.16). The composer Sérgio Nepomuceno indicated that Guerra-Peixe arranged in blocks or sections, giving the impression of jazz influence, especially in the brass section (MIGUEL, 2007, p.18).
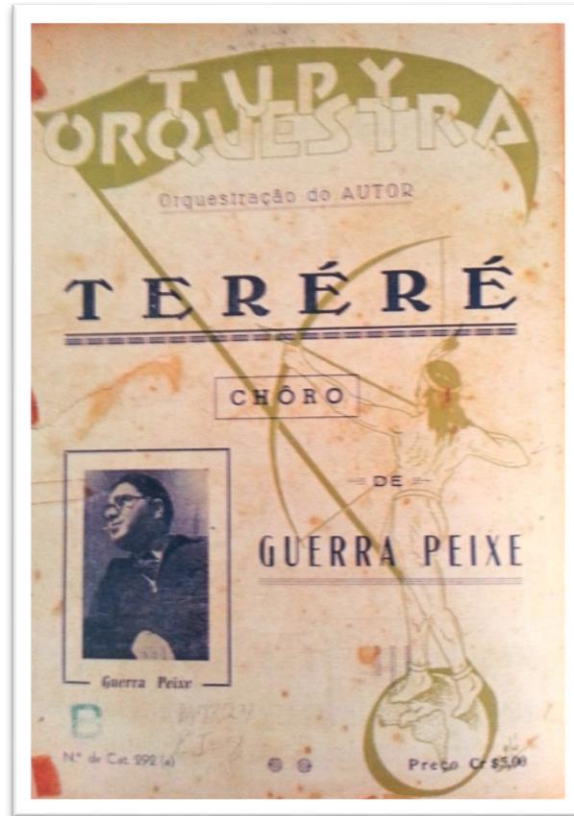
Figure 7. Popular *choro* "Teréré" by Guerra-Peixe. *Source:* Rio de Janeiro National Library.

The conductor and composer Ernani Aguiar observes a notable economy of gestures in Guerra-Peixe's orchestration technique (AGUIAR E, 2007, p.79). He also stresses the lack of human and material resources in several orchestras in Brazil in the 1980s, especially in orchestras of medium and small size. In some places, it was common to see saxophones in the place of bassoons, for example. Guerra-Peixe was aware of this situation and wrote quality arrangements for fewer elements. In the percussion section, for example, where many Brazilian composers wrote for almost an entire orchestra of percussionists, Guerra-Peixe used a maximum of three players plus the timpanist, even in his largest orchestra for *A Retirada da Laguna* (AGUIAR E, 2007, p.82). Aguiar explains that the composer already used the whole orchestra percussively, resulting in a rhythmic richness, at the same time simple and natural. This procedure allowed him to work with a regular-sized percussion section.

2. Background on *Symphony No. 2 Brasília*

2.1 – Historical considerations

The first Brazilian was Salvador, from 1549 to 1763. It moved to Rio de Janeiro from 1763 to 1960, and finally to Brasília from 1960 until the present day. The president who decided to move the capitol from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília was Juscelino Kubitschek (see Figure 8), leading the country from 1956 to 1961. He was considered a visionary who had the slogan "fifty years within five." He wanted to build a solid infrastructure for the country, and building a new capitol from scratch represented the first step in this process.

Figure 8. Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek. *Source:* www.projetomemoria.art.br.

In 1960, the Brazilian radio station of the Ministry of Education (MEC) launched a national competition for composers to write a symphony, with or without a choir, no shorter than thirty minutes, musically portraying the several stages of construction of the new capitol, Brasília (see Figure 9). Interestingly, the judges Camargo Guarnieri, Francisco Mignone, and Lamberto Baldi decided not to grant the first prize, awarding only the second prize as a tie between three candidates: César Guerra-Peixe, Cláudio Santoro, and José Guerra Vicente. The criteria in establishing this result were never disclosed (CHAVES, 1994). Of the three second-place works, only Guerra-Peixe's symphony has received at least five performances — with conductors Isaac Karabtchevsky, Guerra-Peixe, Ernani Aguiar, and Marcelo Ramos, two audio recordings, and two first prizes.

The *Symphony No. 2 Brasília* was premiered in 1963 at the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theatre with the National Symphony Orchestra under Isaac Karabtchevsky, and afterwards with the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra (OSB) (PROJ. GUERRA-PEIXE). Guerra-Peixe was playing in the first violin section at the premiere. Ten days later, the composer conducted the second performance of the symphony during an event promoted by the President João Goulart, who assumed the Brazilian presidency in 1961 after the resignation of Jânio Quadros (AGUIAR L, 2007, p.144). There are two recordings available of the piece: Isaac Karabtchevsky leading the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, and Ernani Aguiar conducting the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra on a CD entitled *Tribute to Guerra-Peixe*. There is also a video recording on Youtube in 2014, under Marcelo Ramos' direction with the Minas Gerais Symphony Orchestra and Lyric Choir. The manuscript score is held at the Rio de Janeiro National Library, released by the composer's niece Jane Guerra-Peixe, the holder of the copyrights for all works by Guerra-Peixe.[1]

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[1] Jane Guerra-Peixe authorized the reproduction of the score specifically for this project.

Figure 9. Advertisement for the Composition Competition published in the newspaper *O Globo* in 1960 in Rio de Janeiro. *Source:* Particular archive of Antônio Guerra Vicente.

2.2 - Musical structure of the symphony

Among the three Guerra-Peixe compositional phases — initial, dodecaphonic, and nationalistic — *Symphony No. 2 Brasília* fits into the nationalistic phase (VETROMILLA, 2002, p.133). Musicologist José Maria Neves classified it as "the most well-constructed work from his nationalistic period, both in the structure level and as a sound result" (CHAVES, 1994). The symphony follows the classical model in four movements with the addition of a choir and a text of the speech by former Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek for the inauguration of the new capitol Brasília, to be spoken by a narrator.[2]

Guerra-Peixe also uses programmatic music techniques in the symphony — imitation and recurrent cells — intensely practiced in his movie scores such as *O Canto do Mar*, *Terra é Sempre Terra*, *O Cavalo 13*, and in the Preludes Nos. 2 and 4 for Guitar in 1966-71 (VETROMILLA, 2010, p.20). Traditional labeling in Italian identifies each of the four movements, and each one is divided into subsections with titles of a descriptive nature in Portuguese (see Figure 10).

According to Vetromilla, the convention of describing movements with subtitles also reflects the influence of Georg Lukács, who advocated for better comprehension of the piece of art by the public (mimetism) (VETROMILLA, 2006, p.83). In this sense, describing the movements of a symphony with recognizable images reflects a step towards his philosophy.

Movement	Italian name	Description in Portuguese	English Translation
First	Allegro ma non troppo	*O Candango em sua terra*	The Candango in his land
	Tempo I	*A caminho do Planalto*	Towards the Planalto
	Moderato	*Recordações que o acompanham*	Memories that follow him
		Chegada Alegre	Happy arrival
Second	Presto	*Trabalho*	At work
Third	Andante	*Elegia para o ausente*	Elegy for the absent
Fourth	Allegro con moto	*Manhã de domingo*	Sunday morning
	Allegretto	*Tarde infantil*	Children in the afternoon
	Andante	*Desce a noite*	Night fall
	Presto	*Volta ao trabalho*	Back to work
	Moderato	*Inauguração da cidade*	Inauguration of the city
	Allegro ma non troppo	*Apoteose*	Apotheosis

Figure 10. General structure of *Symphony No. 2 Brasília.*

This is the background of the composition of the *Symphony No. 2 Brasília,* which became, if not the only, the main Brazilian choral symphony in the repertoire.

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[2] The inauguration of the city took place in April 21, 1960; however, the deadline for submitting a symphony was October 31, 1960.

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Note about the author:

Marcelo Ramos, currently teaching at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, acted as principal conductor of Minas Gerais Symphony Orchestra for almost ten years, performing symphonic repertoire, operas, and popular music. He earned his master degree at Cleveland Institute of Music in 2010, and his doctorade at Ball State University (Indiana) in 2014, sponsored by a scholarship from the CAPES Foundation from Brazil. The scope of his dissertation – the Symphony No. 2 Brasília by César Guerra-Peixe –originated a performance edition and concerts in the US and Brazil.