

O Caixeiro da Taverna

(The Tavern Keeper)

One-Act Chamber Opera by
Guilherme Bernstein

Based on the comedy by
Martins Pena (1846)

"The 2006 lyrical season brought (...) the revelation of the name of the young and promising Guilherme Bernstein from Rio..."

Lauro Machado Coelho, Revista Concerto, São Paulo - Jan./Feb. 2007

"A true master-piece!" Lauro Gomes, Radio MEC - June, 2018

Winner of "Bolsas RioArte" 1998

Manuel, keeper of the tavern of the widow Angélica Pereira, is an ambitious Portuguese immigrant, who has no scruples when it comes to increasing his mistress' profits...

"Tempere-mos a pipa de aguardente com quatro barris de água: já que não podemos encurtar as medidas, aumentemos o líquido!"

(Let's spice up the liquor with two barrels of water: since we can't change the meters, let's increase the liquid!)

His utmost wish is to become partner in the tavern. But the widow will only make him her business partner if he marries her. How can he become a partner without marrying the old, but sensual lady? She is getting a bit too obvious in displaying her affection.

"Não fales em morrer, Manuel. Eu te seguiria! - Oh, homem, perseguido até depois de morto!"

(Don't speak of dying, Manuel. I would follow you!- Oh, man, followed even after death!)

Besides, Manuel is already secretly married to sweet Deolinda,

"quando a luz se estender pelos telhados..."

("when the light spreads over the city...")

whose violent brother, Sargeant Quintino, is starting to become suspicious...

"O sapateiro da esquina disse-me que o viu ontem à noite lá em casa..."

("The shoemaker told me that he saw you coming to our house last night...")

In order to cover for him, Manuel asks his friend Francisco to pretend to be Deolinda's husband. But Francisco has feelings for Angélica – and the widow is cunning...



"Francisquinho, eu te amava..., e te faria sócio! Já

havia preparado nossa escritura de casamento; vê... só o nome está em branco. O lugar era para o teu."

("Francisquinho, I loved you..., and would make you my partner! Our marriage contract is ready, see? Only the name is missing,... waiting for yours...")

Will Francisco ruin it all? And how will Manuel be able to become a partner in the tavern, reveal his marriage and escape being cut to pieces by Quintino's sword?

Introduction

In 1998, Brazil celebrated the 150th anniversary of Luís Carlos Martins Pena's death. He is considered to be the country's most important comedy-writer, and his best known works include: "O Noviço" and "O Juiz de Paz na Roça." Although some noteworthy re-printings of his works have been made over the years, little more had been done to dust off his bust, which sits between Shakespeare and Goethe in the entrance hall at Rio de Janeiro's Theatro Municipal opera house. That is until the city's agency for the arts, RIOARTE, commissioned the young, Rio born, conductor and composer Guilherme Bernstein Seixas to compose "**O Caixeiro da Taverna**." In this work, the young artist paid homage to the old traditions of popular comedy and opera buffa while mixing in his own post-modern style of writing Brazilian music.

Martins Pena

A "carioca," or native of Rio, Pena was the founder of the Brazilian theater and creator of Brazil's version of a popular theater that reflects the life and costumes of the city - a genre that has lived on, under names such as "Teatro de Revista", "Besteirol" etc. Martins Pena was Brazil's great comedy master in the XIX century, and he is the longest living and the most "carioca" of our stage. Some say that his humor is simple, not very refined - which is not necessarily a flaw - an exploration of the absurdity of everyday life. Whether that is the case or not, most agree that his works are faithful reconstructions, that use caricatures to depict the society of his time, its values and its attitudes. Already in 1888, the famous historian Sílvio Romero said that, if all records of life in Rio during the beginning of the XIX century disappeared, Martins Pena's work alone would suffice to describe it. That by itself would justify the interest in his work, especially so few years after Brazil's 500th year anniversary, an emblematic time for self-reflection. Nevertheless, Martins Pena's work goes further than that, and not only for its dramatic qualities. Beyond a first level of timeless comedy, the author describes characters and situations that, in essence, remain unaltered as Brazil enters the 3rd millennium. Therefore, in a way his plays are still very current, sometimes frustratingly current.

The Libretto

Manuel, a Portuguese immigrant, is trying to become a partner in the tavern of the widow Angélica Pereira, where he works. As tavern keeper, he is responsible for the business, and there is no moral code he isn't ready to bend or break when it comes to increasing the profits. The sensuous widow, though, would like to have him as a husband, as well as a business partner. Manuel pretends to play her game, but he is secretly married to Deolinda, a young seamstress who lives in the neighborhood. To make matters more complicated, his friend Francisco declares he is in love with the widow. Meanwhile the angry brother of Deolinda, Sargeant Quintino, sword in hand, wants to know why Manuel has been seen around his house late at night. Around this typical *opera buffa* "imbroglio", the author describes places and situations in Brazil's historical capital, Rio de Janeiro: the cariocas way of life and their social and economic expectations. And, since it is a comedy, it concludes with a happy ending.

The Opera

The opera "**O Caixeiro da Taverna**" is a faithful transcription of Martins Pena comedy, respecting its speech, dialogues and situations. Also its language, frankly *buffa* and permeated with Brazilian good humor, was kept in its integrity, its sometimes old-fashioned quality adding to the characterization of the play. The option of a chamber opera, in terms of size of instrumental ensemble (as few as 8 players) as well as duration (a little over an hour), was a natural one, given the small number of situations (the interior of a tavern in mid XIX century Rio de Janeiro) and characters (five singers and one actress that can act like or be substituted for anything the stage director is able to conceive). Therefore, the opera presents features that make it relatively simple to put together, and makes possible all kinds of stage arrangements, from traditional Italian opera house stages to the most intimate performing space. Also its musical language helps to create an immediate impact; within the frame of an homage to old time opera, it incorporates sonorities and procedures of XXth century music into the Brazilian tradition of composition, in a contemporary yet accessible form of art.

Cast

Characters

Manuel, *Tavern keeper*
Angélica Pereira, *the widow*
Deolinda, *young seamstress*
Sargento Quintino, *Deolinda's brother*
Francisco, *Manuel's friend*

baritone
soprano
soprano
bass
tenor

Antônia, *clerk*
(speechless part 'ad libidum')

actor, puppet etc.

First Production

2006

Homero Velho
Celinelena Ietto
Flávia Fernandes
Murilo Neves
Geilson Santos

Second Prod.

2017/18

Licio Bruno
Adalgisa Rosa
Natália Hubner
Alessandro Santana
Renato Gonçalves

Tadeu Kuzendorff

EXCERPTS OF THE PREMIERE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ANDRÉ HELLER-LOPES AT
[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=ORIOOTUYO8Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORIOOTUYO8Y)
OR THE WHOLE OPERA [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=FAX-IN-QTCS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAX-IN-QTCS)

SECOND PRODUCTION (2018) - DIRECTED BY LICIO BRUNO (PROGRAM BY TV BRASIL)
[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/JK25MJF4A68](https://youtu.be/JK25MJF4A68) + [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/NGD2OPH6J_O](https://youtu.be/NGD2OPH6J_O)

