Variações Sérias Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros - Piano a Quatro Mãos, by Ronaldo Miranda: A Performer's Guide

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A Dissertation

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in

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by
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Abstract

This study examines Ronaldo Miranda’s *Variações Série Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros – Piano a Quatro Mãos*, 1998, transcribed from the original, which was composed for wind quintet (1991). The piano duet version is well-known and part of the core repertoire of most Brazilian piano duos.

Enhanced by the interview with the composer, the paper starts by addressing the relevant facts of his rich and prolific musical life while tracing four compositional phases through a list of his piano works.

A brief history of the *Serious Variations* (so named in this paper) deals with its genesis, characteristics, versions, and known recordings. The study presents an overview of the birth of urban music in Rio de Janeiro in the 1900s, exploring Anacleto de Medeiros and his schottische *Yara*, the object of Miranda’s *Variações* that is the topic of this study.

An analysis of the language and form serves as a foundation for the examination of interpretive facets, such as fingerings, dynamics, and character. Interviews with Ronaldo Miranda and the pianist Josiane Kevorkian provide insights into the how the piece should be performed.

It is hoped that the elements discussed in this study will lead to a greater understanding of the work, help performers resolve various performance challenges, and eventually lead to a broader dissemination of this distinctive and beautiful piece.
Introduction

Western classical music makers, including performers, producers, managers, and impresarios, indisputably focus on European and American composers. This disproportionate modus operandi demonstrates an unconscious disregard for so many talented composers born outside the Europe–United States axis and can be unfair. To offset this unbalanced tendency, the author selected, for this research, Variações Sérias Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros – Piano a Quatro Mãos (Serious Variations on a Theme by Anacleto de Medeiros – Piano for Four Hands) by the Brazilian composer Ronaldo Miranda, born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948.

Miranda’s works are into the core repertoire in all Brazilian music conservatories and concert halls. He is considered one of the most performed living composers in his country. Miranda is an accomplished composer and pianist, and he knows how to explore the piano to fulfill its greatest potential. The piano’s prominent role in his output encompasses pieces for piano solo, piano for four hands, two pianos and percussion, piano and orchestra, and chamber music with piano.

Although the composer has never belonged to any organized group such as Música Nova or Música Viva (Vasco Mariz, appropriately, placed him within the third independent generation after Villa-Lobos),¹ his immense talent caught the attention of musicians in Brazil. Ronaldo Miranda’s life and work have been the object of several theses, dissertations, and articles ² due to his undeniable contribution to Brazilian music and music history in the last several decades. Some of these academic documents served as valued references for the author, who centered her inquiry on one of Miranda’s piano four-hands pieces, not researched so far. The Variações Sérias

² Since the 1980s, Miranda has been scholarly researched by musicologists, singers, and instrumentalists, some of them listed on the bibliography.
Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros, a set of ten variations based on a Brazilian popular theme, was originally composed in 1991 for wind quintet and transcribed in 1998 for piano four hands.

In this paper, the Variações Sérias Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros is referred to as Serious Variations for convenience. The study includes this introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion with final remarks. The appendix provides the score manuscript of the Serious Variations (the transcribed version of 1998).

Chapter one presents the composer’s rich biography, early contact with Brazilian popular music, formal music studies, influences, and the numerous aspects of his career, for example as pianist, composer, journalist, music critic, Vice-Director of the Foundation of Arts in Rio de Janeiro, professor of two universities, and director of Sala Cecília Meireles, the most important concert hall of Rio de Janeiro. To complete the chapter, an overview of Miranda’s piano pieces provides information about his four stylistic phases (Brazilian modal, free atonal, neo-tonal, and eclectic), mentioning some of his most characteristic compositional techniques. Miranda’s biography and piano output demonstrate his immense legacy for the classical music in Brazil.

Chapter two addresses the historical contextualization of Anacleto de Medeiros (1866-1907), a renowned popular composer and wind-band conductor who was in fashion around the 1900s in Rio de Janeiro. During this prolific period, Medeiros emerged as one of the main figures on the development of genres and dances that dominated the saloons and the streets in the former capital of Brazil. Urban music with a more genuine Brazilian sentiment was evolving. Anacleto’s beautiful schottische Yara, composed in 1895, inspired Miranda to build his Serious

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3 Ronaldo Miranda, interview by author, June 2, 2021. The term “Brazilian modal” is the most accurate to describe Miranda’s first phase, differently form the term “Tonal” found on the other papers about him.

Variations. At least two other artists made use of the same tune: the poet, Catulo da Paixão Cearense, wrote several verses to it and released the song entitled, *Rasga o Coração* (1909). Villa-Lobos, in 1926, quoted the same theme in the second part of his *Choros No. 10*.

Presenting the biographies of both composers and their artistic context gives readers an exciting background about the genesis of the composition, the focal point of the paper.

In Chapter 3, the author addresses facets that can guide piano duos on their practice of the *Serious Variations*. The musical analysis merges commentaries on form and language with practical suggestions that encompass interpretive details and some physical issues for the pianists. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine performance peculiarities and concerns that may exist in these variations, with the aim of providing piano duos some helpful performance guidelines for learning the piece and, ultimately, circulating it widely in the United States and abroad.

Robert Stake asserts, “[The intrinsic qualitative study] is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases … but instead because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest.” 5 Thus, this research can be classified as an intrinsic Qualitative Case Study since *Serious Variations* is a masterpiece of the Brazilian piano four hands repertoire and can be interesting for piano duos who search for new music other than European or American.

Four primary sources served as data for this study: 1) the only current score of Miranda’s *Serious Variations for piano for four hands*, 1998, in manuscript form and unpublished; 2) the score of Miranda’s *Serious Variations for wind quintet*, 1991, in manuscript form and unpublished; 3) The first recording of the piece, in the CD entitled *Duo Bretas-Kevorkian*, 2002.

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(in conjunction with the score, listening to this recording helped identify the most relevant passages for interpreters and where commentaries or suggestions were desirable and necessary; 4) Interviews with the composer Ronaldo Miranda and the pianist partner of the Duo Bretas-Kevorkian, Josiane Kevorkian. The interview with the composer gave validity and reliability to the information gathered in this research into his professional trajectory and Serious Variations. The interview with the pianist enriched the study thanks to her interpretive viewpoints and suggestions for the ensemble.

The composer does not authorize any typesetting of his Serious Variations for any purpose. Therefore, the Appendix has only his manuscript score. The author only used short typeset excerpts to illustrate the musical examples of the piece.

The proposal of this study was submitted to the IRB (Institutional Review Board), who determined that it does not need a formal review, for it falls under a category that does not need their approval.
Chapter 1. Ronaldo Miranda: Life and Piano Works

Life

Ronaldo Coutinho de Miranda was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948 when Rio, still the capital of Brazil, had a very active cultural life. The cariocas[^6] were, then, used to listen to world-renowned artists such as Arthur Rubinstein, Alfred Cortot, Marguerite Long, Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland. The Municipal Theater concert series was always sold-out.

By 1948, the nationalist music, introduced at the end of the nineteenth century during the rise of the nationalist movement, and the recently arrived vanguard music were cultivated by the Brazilian classical composers. At the same time, the popular genres and dances from Europe mixed with the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous rhythms were in vogue, attracting people to Carnival, balls, radio programs, music bands, and ensembles on the streets or in the bars.

Miranda was born at a very favorable time for music. His family wanted him to study piano, but he was persistent in his desire to learn accordion instead. He attended the Mário Mascarenhas Accordion School from 1954 until 1960. The repertoire was elementary, centered in Spanish-style music (boleros, tangos), Brazilian and South American tunes, and arrangements of Italian arias. The theory lessons, however, were quite comprehensive, providing Miranda with a solid ground for his further studies.[^7]

Miranda attended respected private Catholic schools, Colégio Santo Antonio Maria Zaccaria and Colégio Santo Inácio, where he received a good education in the humanities,

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[^6]: Carioca is a term used in Brazil to describe a person born in Rio de Janeiro. It still carries an idealized profile of a more cultured, charming, and cheerful person, at once.

[^7]: The data about Miranda’s biography in this chapter was collected from different sources, including the recent interview via zoom, the interview with Moore (2004), his most recent catalog organized by the Brazilian Academy of Music (ABM, 2018), and different academic papers, all listed on the bibliography: Duarte (2002), Giaretta (2013), Umbelino (2011), and Vieira (2016). The author preferred not to cite each one separately since most of Miranda’s biography is found in all the mentioned studies. The present research updated and corrected some pieces of information, though.
including French Literature and Latin. At the age of thirteen (1961), he began to study piano and music theory in the technical course of the School of Music at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (EM-UFRJ), a non-graduated course that prepares students for music studies in college, usually offered by the federal universities of Brazil. Miranda enjoyed his piano lessons and even wrote one piece for the instrument (his Suite No.1 dates from 1965). After graduating from high school in 1966, he entered the EM-UFRJ to pursue a bachelor’s degree in piano performance with Dulce de Saules. He graduated in 1970.

His father passed away during his freshman year, when Miranda was only 18; this event led him to look for his first job, which he found at the prestigious Jornal do Brasil (1966). After receiving his degree in piano performance, Miranda also pursued a degree in journalism (1971-1973), which he thought might help him make his living. Miranda’s passion for music was so deeply rooted, however, that he applied to study Composition (1968) in the class taught by the conductor Henrique Morelenbaum (EM-UFRJ). He finally graduated with that degree in 1976. In 1987 Miranda completed his master’s in Music at EM-UFRJ and, in 1997, a Doctor of Arts at São Paulo University (ECA-USP).

As a journalist, the composer became music critic for Jornal do Brasil from 1974 to 1982, where he had been working since 1966 as a public relations chairperson. From 1982 to 1985, he continued to contribute sporadically to the periodical. His critiques displayed a deep knowledge of repertoire, style, form, and interpretation. Between 1993 and 1995, Miranda signed on again as Jornal do Brasil’s primary music critic.

From 1984 to 1998, Miranda was a professor of composition at EM-UFRJ. In the year 2000 he was a visiting professor at Arizona State University (ASU). The professor also taught composition, orchestration, and musical analysis at the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo (ECA-USP) between 2004 and 2020.
As a pianist, Miranda played solo recitals, duo recitals with the pianist Ilze Trindade, and premiered several of his own works, such as the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (Teatro Cultura Artística, São Paulo, 1983), and Concertino for Piano and String Orchestra (Teatro Santa Isabel, Recife, 1986). He also recorded some of his art-songs.

Among other activities, the composer worked as advisor and vice-director at the National Institute of Music of the National Foundation of Art (INM-FUNARTE) between 1985 and 1989. In 1994, Ronaldo Miranda assumed Chair No. 13 at the Brazilian Academy of Music (ABM), the most valued music society in Brazil, founded by Heitor Villa-Lobos in 1945. Miranda has also been an honorary member of the National Academy of Music (ANM) since 2003. Between 1995 and 2004, he was the director of the most important concert hall of Rio de Janeiro, Sala Cecília Meireles (SCM).

Miranda débuted as a composer in 1977, at the age of twenty-nine. He won first prize in the chamber music category at the Second Biennial of Brazilian Contemporary Music, the most relevant event in Brazil for classical music that endures today. The piece that earned the recognition was Trajetória (text by Orlando Codá), a sextet for soprano, flute, clarinet, cello, percussion, and piano that saw a stunning success and marked the starting point of his career as a composer. It was a very successful début for a composer who, as of the time of this writing (June 2021), went on to write 106 works.

Several prizes and achievements enrich Miranda’s biography and confirm his essential role in the Brazilian classical music scene. The following paragraphs highlight prominent events from approximately each decade of his career. In 1978, the composer represented Brazil in the Tribune International de Compositeurs de l’UNESCO, in Paris. In 1980, he won the second prize in the National Composition Contest of FUNARTE. In 1981 Miranda was offered the Troféu Golfinho de Ouro, by Rio de Janeiro State for his work as a composer. That same year,
he wrote *Variações Sinfônicas*, (premiered by São Paulo State Orchestra – OSESP and Eleazar de Carvalho), which won the Best Orchestral Work prize from the Association of Critics of Arts of São Paulo (APCA) in 1982. In 1983, the composer participated (with his flute trio *Oriens III*) in the World Music Days Festival, promoted by the *Société Internationale de la Musique Contemporaine* (SIMC) in Denmark and also premiered his own difficult *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, as the soloist (in São Paulo). In 1984, Miranda received his highest order, *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, from the Culture Ministry of France. This was also the year of his very successful *Appassionata for Guitar*, premiered in 1986 by Fabio Zanon in London. There are nine recordings of the piece. Also in 1984, he was awarded the fourth prize in the National Choral Arrangements Contest of FUNARTE. In 1985, Miranda was selected to participate in the Tenth Biennial of Music of Berlin, and in the following year, won the third prize in the International Composition Contest of Budapest with his *Trois Moments pour Violoncelle Seul*. It débuted at the Budapest Spring Festival (1987). In 1986, Miranda participated again (with his work *Images for Clarinet and Percussion*) in the World Music Days, promoted by the SIMC, this time in Budapest. In that same year, he débuted his *Concertino for Piano and String Orchestra*, as the soloist (in Recife). He wrote his first opera, *Dom Casmurro*, in 1988.

In 1992, he was awarded the first prize in the National Composition Contest called *America 500 Anos*, promoted by UFRJ, and participated in two festivals: the *Aspekte Festival* (Austria) and *Musiques del Nostre Temps* (Spain). *Horizontes for Orchestra* (awarded in *America 500 Anos*) was premiered in 1993 at Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro. In 1996, the composer participated in the series *Sonidos de las Americas /Brasil* (New York, Carnegie Hall). In 1997 his beautiful *Suite Festiva for Orchestra* was premiered at SCM. His *Sinfonia 2000* was
commissioned to celebrate the quincentenary of the discovery of Brazil and premiered in Rio de Janeiro at Municipal Theater.

In 2001, Miranda was awarded the Troféu Carlos Gomes by the State Cultural Secretary of São Paulo. Also in 2001, he wrote O Universo da Orquestra, a didactical work for non-connoisseurs explaining the instruments of the orchestra as in The Young Person’s Guide by Britten. Berlin and Beyreuth saw, in 2003, the world premiere of his cycle of songs Unterwegs for Baritone and Small Ensemble with poems by Hermann Hesse. A few days later, the composer traveled to listen to the Czech premiere of Recitativo, Variações e Fuga for Violin and Piano, performed by this author and Jaroslav Sonsky, in the prestigious Chamber Music Series of the Symphonic Orchestra of Prague. That same year, he was the resident composer at the Brahmshaus in Baden-Baden where he composed Festspielmusik for Two Pianos and Percussion. In 2004, Miranda attended the début of his Concerto for Four Guitars and Orchestra at Meyerhoff Hall, Baltimore. In 2005, Festspielmusik was premiered by the Bretas-Kevorkian duo and percussionists Rodrigo Foti and Leo Souza at SCM. 2006 saw the début of Celebrare - uma Abertura Festiva, commissioned by SCM to celebrate its 40 years. In 2006, Miranda wrote his second opera, A Tempestade, based on William Shakespeare’s homonym play, premiered at Theatro São Pedro (São Paulo). Later that year, he earned another award by APCA - Best Experimental Work for A Tempestade. In 2007, his Missa Brevis – o Sagrado e o Profano em Celebração da Capela Real, for mezzo-soprano, choir and orchestra, was written to celebrate the 200-year anniversary of the arrival of the Portuguese royal family and court to Rio de Janeiro (1808-2008). In 2009, his Concerto para Violino e Orquestra was premiered by Claudio Cruz (violin), at Sala São Paulo.

Miranda’s third opera, O Menino e a Liberdade, was created in 2013 at Theatro São Pedro (São Paulo). The opera earned him the Best Vocal Work, awarded by APCA. Two
premieres happened in 2013 - *Duas Danças Latino-Americanas*, and *Jogos for Cello and Orchestra*. 2014 was marked by the creation of *Variações Temporais (Beethoven Revisitado)*, commissioned by OSESP. In 2016, Miranda wrote *Episódio Sinfônico* for the Philharmonic Orchestra of Goiás and *Transfigurações for flute and orchestra*, premiered by Rubens Schuenck, at Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro. 2018 - *Seis Cantos de Lorca for soprano, choir, and orchestra* premiered by Rosana Lamosa at Sala São Paulo with OSESP, that commissioned the piece to celebrate its 70th anniversary. In the year of the pandemic, 2020, the composer wrote *Comigo me Desavim* for Voice and Piano, based on a poem by Francisco de Sá Miranda (Coimbra, 1481-1558). His most recent composition is *Variações 2020 for Guitar*, commissioned by the guitarist João Luiz Rezende, to be premiered in Portland – Oregon, in September 2021.  

**Piano Works**

Ronaldo Miranda’s piano writing is idiomatic and reveals a composer who skillfully explores his instrument with outstanding craftsmanship. The long years of solid piano training and pianistic experience shaped a beautiful communion between his musical language and keyboard writing technique. This allows him to evaluate what works and does not work for pianists, who, in turn, must have advanced performance skills to be able to play, at least decently, his intricate piano works.

The composer divides his piano works (and works in general) into four creational periods:

I – Modal Brazilian phase (ending in about 1977): Miranda mastered tonal music and followed the traditional rules learned while he was an undergraduate student of composition. It

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8 João Luiz Rezende, e-mail correspondence with the author, May 27, 2021.
was difficult, he said about that time, to understand the music of Stravinsky, Berio, Penderecki, Boulez, Dallapiccola, or even Lutoslawski. He was required to write in all genres and styles, but the contemporary “didn’t feel natural.” Miranda felt intimidated with that world \(^9\) but soon learned how to free himself and disobey certain traditional rules. Pieces from this period include: *Suite No. 1* (1965), *Suite No. 2* (1973), and the *Suite No. 3* (1973). This latter, perhaps, is his most played piano piece. It contains major and minor sevenths, parallel fourths and fifths, intervals that he likes to explore.

II – Free atonalism (1977-1983): Feeling a gap in his output, Miranda decided to venture into a more contemporary language. His first venture in this new direction was his atonal sextet *Trajetória*. The term free before atonalism is worth noting. It explains what happens with some of Miranda’s atonal works; it is possible to find that kind of melody with a Brazilian touch, or a less contemporary passage. As Miranda says, the free atonalism “does not follow, necessarily, any system (dodecaphonism, serialism, pointillism) … [The author] is free to do whatever he thinks is good out of tonality.” \(^{10}\) Pieces of this period include: *Prólogo, Discurso e Reflexão* (1980), *Toccata* (1982), and *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1983). In the *Discurso*, for instance, Ronaldo uses rhythmic structures in a rich ostinato that delivers a more Brazilian atonal writing. No tonal center, tritones, quartal chords, absence of folkish elements, dense structure, and no functional chords are some of the characteristics of this period.

III – Neo-tonality (1984-1997): The composer felt more at ease and closer to his genuine nature when he developed a style that allowed him to be modern and uniquely himself at the same time. A very basic definition for this style, which has a more evident key center, is provided by Peter Scott Silberman: “I define neo-tonality as a repertoire that combines features

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\(^{10}\) Ronaldo Miranda, interview by author, May 2021.
of common-practice tonality with features of atonality.” 11 In Miranda’s own words, “When I write close to tonality, I am neo-tonal. This is why I do not use [here] the classic tonality, where everything is ruled and the harmonic sequences are previewed and calculated.” 12 He gives an even simpler definition: “Neo-tonality is a free use of consonances.” 13 Pieces of this period include: *Estrela Brilhante* (1984, Bright Star), *Concertino para Piano e Orquestra de Cordas* (1986), and *Tango para Piano a Quatro Mãos* (1993). In *Estrela Brilhante*, Miranda borrows the theme from Brazilian folklore and shrouds it with contemporary writing. The first movement of the *Concertino* has atonal cadences and chromatic scales, although it is neo-tonal, overall. In his *Tango*, the outer sections, full of furious octatonic scales, yield to a melodious and tonal middle section. It is not astonishing that Miranda’s *Serious Variations* (original version, 1991) dates to this neo-tonal period.

IV – Eclecticism (since 1997): The composer is emancipated, without commitment to any aesthetic trends. There are no more concerns about style nor compositional constraints. Miranda writes according to his aspirations, dreams, longings, mood, and also according to occasions. Pieces from this period include: *Três Micro-Peças* (2001), *Variações Asorovarc* (2002), *Festspielmusik* (2003), *Frevo* (2004), *Valsa Só* (2005), *Prelúdio e Fuga* (2005), *Aeroflux* (2015). To demonstrate his eclecticism, the *Asorovarc Variations* is close to tonality, *Três Micro-Peças* is atonal, *Festspielmusik* is neo-tonal, and *Aeroflux (Revisitando Nazareth)* is in a contemporary language, despite of the fact that it pays tribute to Ernesto Nazareth, the most important Brazilian composer of Brazilian tangos.

Although Miranda’s musical language has changed over time, his pieces have a consistent characteristic: he has always valued the rigor of the form. As he says, “The traditional

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forms are useful to contemporary composers because they offer a definite balance between unity and variety, as well as they provide the listener with a memory reference.”

The old and the new coexist very well in Miranda’s pieces, hence his four compositional phases are not absolute. Some of his musical procedures belong to more than one period. In addition, a few pieces feature characteristics that do not match their chronological periods (for instance, some of his pieces for children).

Finally, Miranda’s piano works are impregnated with at least a few recognizable traits, i.e., some musical devices and elements in the music are easily recognizable by listeners as his. A few examples are octatonic scales, major seventh chords built on quartal structures (in chords, arpeggiation), alternated (intermittent) chords, rhythms from Brazil and South America.

The complete list of Miranda’s piano works (including the children’s pieces) is presented below, by category and in chronological order:

a) Piano Solo – fifteen pieces

*Suite No. 1* (1965)

*Prelúdio e Fuga* (1965/2005)

*Suite No. 2* (1973)

*Suite No. 3* (1973)

*Prólogo, Discurso e Reflexão* (1980) – dedicated to José Carlos Cocarelli

*Toccata* (1982) – dedicated to Estela Caldi

*Requebradinho* (1983) – dedicated to Cecília Ferreira de Miranda

*Marcha Complicada* (1983) – to Cecília Ferreira de Miranda and Cristina Hollanda

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16 The pinned pieces were written for children, including his two daughters, Cecília Ferreira de Miranda and Maria Clara Ferreira de Miranda.
Uma Valsinha* (1983) – to Cecilia Ferreira de Miranda and Cristina Hollanda


Mini-Suite* (1985) – dedicated to Maria Clara Ferreira de Miranda

Três Micro-Peças (2001) – dedicated to Maria Teresa Madeira

Variações Asorovarc (2002, for harpsichord or piano) – dedicated to Rosana Lanzelotte

Valsa Só (2004)

Aeroflux – Revisitando Nazareth (2015) – dedicated to Alexandre Dias
  b) Piano for Four Hands – three pieces

Tango (1993) – dedicated to Zaida Valentim e Marcelo Alvarenga

Serious Variations (1998) – dedicated to Patrícia Bretas and Josiane Kevorkian

Frevo (2004) – dedicated to Sonia Vieira and Maria Helena Andrade
  c) Two Pianos (with percussion) – one piece

Festspielmusik for Two Pianos and Percussion (2003) – in memoriam of Johannes Brahms
  d) Piano and Orchestra – two pieces

Concerto para Piano e Orquestra (1983)

Concertino para Piano e Orquestra de Cordas (1986)
Chapter 2. Variações Sérias Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros

A Brief Story

Variações Sérias sobre um tema de Anacleto de Medeiros was originally composed for wind quintet in 1991 and dedicated to José Botelho (clarinet) and Noel Devos (French horn), both members of the Villa-Lobos Quintet, which debuted the piece. The composer chose Anacleto’s Yara primarily because he liked the theme and also “because it has a Bachian rigor,”17 which makes it an excellent piece upon which to compose variations.

Miranda transcribed Yara in 1998 for piano for four hands and dedicated the new version to the duo Bretas-Kevorkian (Patricia Bretas and Josiane Kevorkian).

![Figure 1. Dedication of Serious Variations to the Bretas-Kevorkian Piano Duo (front page of the music score in manuscript form)](image)

In 1999, the duo premiered it in Rio de Janeiro, in one of its most charming concert venues, the Foundation Eva Klabin. Eminent personalities from the classical music society

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17 Ronaldo Miranda, interview with author, June 2, 2021.
attended the recital, including Ronaldo Miranda, the conductor Roberto Tibiriçá, and the pianist Maria da Penha. Since then, the duo has been performing the piece, which soon became part of the repertoire of several piano duos in Brazil.

![Program of the début of Serious Variations in July 15, 1999 at the Fundação Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro](image)

After several years, in 2016, Miranda’s *Serious Variations* were premiered in eight cities in Europe – Czech Republic, Hungary, Belgium, and Luxemburg, during a tour of the Bretas-Kevorkian duo. The audiences in every place were very receptive to the piece and some pianists asked for the music score of *Serious Variations*, or of any other work by Ronaldo Miranda. Thanks to some European piano duos, since then, the piece has been played outside of Brazil.
The idea of transcribing the work to piano for four hands was born in 1998, when the duo Bretas-Kevorkian was preparing to play a Brazilian program in France and England that included Miranda’s *Tango*. As the pianists had never met the composer, their professor, Maria da Penha, invited him for an audition at her house, where the two pianists would have the opportunity to receive critiques and advice directly from the composer. The meeting went very well and motivated Miranda to transcribe his *Serious Variations* that same year for the duo. Before delivering the music score, the composer played it several times with Harlei Elbert\(^\text{18}\) to check anything that could hinder the performance.

The new version of *Serious Variations* gained audiences all over the country from 1999 on and became part of the core repertoire of professional piano duos in Brazil. It was first recorded by Bretas-Kevorkian (2002), followed by Celina Szrvinsk e Miguel Rosselini (2005),

\(^{18}\) Dr. Harlei Elbert is a Brazilian pianist, Professor of Music Theory at EM-UFRJ, and former Director of the same institution.
and Sonia Maria Vieira e Maria Helena Andrade (2007). The piece is also included in the CD *Patrícia Bretas Interpreta Ronaldo Miranda – Piano Works* (2013).

Miranda’s catalogue displays at least five works in the form of theme and variations: *Variações Sinfônicas* (1980), *Serious Variations* (1991 and 1998, another composer’s theme), *Variações Asorovarc* for Piano (2002, folk tune), *Variações Temporais for Orchestra* (2014), and *Variações 2020 for Guitar* (2020). In addition to these, it is worth mentioning the third movement (Tema e Variações) of his *Sinfonia 2000* (1999) and *Recitativo, Variações e Fuga* for Violin and Piano (1980). The form is attractive due to its inductive process of writing, either by using the composer’s own creation or by quoting another composer’s tune. In the latter case, a partnership establishes a connection between both composers around the same musical idea.

The title, *Serious Variations*, is a reference to Mendelssohn’s *Variations Sérieuses pour Piano op. 54* (1841) but any similarity ends there. Differently from the German composer, Miranda dissolves the theme in some variations such that listeners can barely recognize it. Moreover, Anacleto’s tune alludes to a feeling of melancholy in the style of the chorões, a mood very distant from Mendelssohn’s “serious” theme.

**Anacleto de Medeiros: Life and Background**

Anacleto de Medeiros (1866-1907) was born on Ilha de Paquetá, a charming island in Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro, frequented by aristocrats, nobles, writers, painters, and musicians who loved Paquetá for its clear and calm waters. Medeiros was born to a physician and a black freed mother. He was sent to the navy War Arsenal school for boys, where he

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19 There is a second transcription, a version for four guitars made by the American guitarist Paul Galbraith and recorded by Delus, U.S.A.

20 Chorões: born in Rio de Janeiro, the term refers to the weeping instrumentalists who played choro in Rio de Janeiro around the 1900s. The singular of chorões in chorão.

21 Miranda likes to borrow titles of pieces that he loves. For instance, one of his most successful pieces is *Appassionata for guitar*, in allusion to the title of Beethoven’s great Piano Sonata op. 57.
received his first music lessons and played flute and piccolo. He later polished his music skills and, at age eighteen, entered the prestigious Imperial Conservatory in 1884. There, the composer studied with Henrique Alves de Mesquita, who quickly became his friend and supporter. A contemporary of Villa-Lobos, Chiquinha Gonzaga, Ernesto Nazareth, and composer of several modinhas, schottisches, polkas, and waltzes, Anacleto de Medeiros was essential in establishing the new genre choro in Rio de Janeiro, a new and genuine carioca urban music. The singer and researcher, Paulo Tapajós emphasizes his importance to music, stating that he was “one of the central pillars in the structuring of the Brazilian popular music,” helping to fit European dances into the language of the rodas de choro (circles of choro). The carioca urban music assumed, gradually, a characteristic and particular way of writing and performing that repertoire.

A typical choro ensemble usually consisted of two guitars (one with seven strings), a cavaquinho/ mandolin, and a flute. The instrumentalists were known as chorões, and the “circle of choro” happened when the chorões gathered to play and have fun. Tambourine, clarinet, and/or trumpet could be added. These musicians interpreted the European genres transforming them to more carioca-like genres. According to Alexandre A. Zamith (1999), these groups impregnated a weeping (choro means, literally, weeping) character to the pieces they played, a melancholic mood conveyed to melodic lines and basses. Thus, choro was a particular manner of playing that kind of repertoire. Anacleto de Medeiros was one of the foremost chorões.

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22 The Portuguese royal family would only leave for Portugal in 1889, due to the Declaration of Republic. The Imperial Conservatory was the only formal institution of music in Brazil; created in 1841 by the emperor D. Pedro II, it is, currently, the School of Music of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (EM-UFRJ).
26 The typical bass line of the seven-string guitar of a choro is known as baixaria, made of descending or ascending few notes in chromatic or diatonic scales, to embellish the bass by filling in the empty spaces in the melody.
His life is marked by the bands he organized and conducted, an activity that he took seriously. He raised the musical level of the participants in these groups. In 1896, already a renowned composer and conductor, he was invited to lead the most valued music band of his time, the “Firefighters Band of Rio de Janeiro.” *Maestro Anacleto*, as he is known in Brazil, innovated by adding arrangements of the dances in vogue in the city to the military repertoire of his Firefighters band. The first recordings of the band, the first ever made in Brazil, were made in 1902 in Rio de Janeiro by Casa Edison, led by the Czech Fred Figner. ²⁷

Figure 4. *Roda de Choro* na Adega da Lapa, by Álvaro Marins (1881-1949), ca. 1930

The schottische *Yara* was written in 1895, as a tribute to a boat, also named *Yara*, which was the champion at a regatta in Paquetá. Written in rondo form ABACA, A minor, *Yara* soon became one of his most famous pieces in Rio de Janeiro.

Example 1. Anacleto de Medeiros, *Yara*

After Anacleto’s death, a Brazilian poet, Catulo da Paixão Cearense (1863-1946), who used to frequent the circles of *choro*, wrote lyrics to *Yara*. Catulo was in the habit of doing this for many other tunes played by his friends who were *chorões*. Gradually the poet transformed
those instrumental and rhythmic dances into songs in a slower tempo - more *modinhas*-like. Because Catulo liked to give new titles to the tunes into which he inserted lyrics, they ultimately seemed to be *his* works.

Thus, the instrumental schottische *Yara* became a song, a *modinha* with words by Catulo da Paixão Cearense. Catulo lyrics were full of sentimental bursts which perfectly matched the melancholic melody. The poet renamed the piece *Rasga o Coração (Rend the Heart)* first recorded in 1910 by Mario Pinheiro.

![Figure 5. Rasga o Coração - Front page of the original score](image)

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*Modinha* – a literary song born in Portugal as *Moda*, that assumed popular and profane facets when brought to Brazil, where it became *modinha*. 
Rasga o Coração was spectacularly successful and inspired Villa-Lobos to use parts A and B of the tune (music and lyrics) in the second movement of his Choros No. 10 (1926), whose first edition at Max Eschig came to be subtitled Rasga o Coração with an acknowledgement: “D’après la poésie de Catulo Cearense.” Nevertheless, Villa-Lobos negotiated the copyrights with his publisher not mentioning Anacleto’s tune Yara, nor paying any copyrights. This professional snub turned into scandal, and Brazil’s foremost composer was accused of plagiarism.

It seems that Villa-Lobos did not intend to plagiarize; rather, he only meant to reinforce his practice of using folk tunes, a decisive influence in his entire output during that period. Taking into account that both Anacleto and Catulo belonged, historically, to the popular group of musicians from the 1900s, and that Villa-Lobos was frequently with them in the circles of choro, it is not unlikely that Villa thought he was simply exalting the carioca music and the two musicians whose talents he admired. This viewpoint is shared by Gabriel Ferrão Moreira, ²⁹ who posits that Villa-Lobos did not intentionally plagiarize.

Due to the legal actions initiated by the publisher, Guimarães Martins, who had bought all the copyrights from Catulo, Villa-Lobos had to remove the poet’s lyrics. Instead, he inserted non-lexical vocables into his Choros No. 10. Even though Catulo’s lyrics have been in the public domain since 2016, many concerts still use the non-lexical vocables in place of actual lyrics. The judicial decision was in favor of Villa-Lobos.

Several decades later, in 1991, Ronaldo Miranda chooses to use Yara, giving Anacleto the authorship of the theme in the title of his Serious Variations.

Chapter 3. Language, Form, and Interpretive Guide

An important aspect of the Serious Variations is its crossover between the classical and the popular. Miranda wanted to dress Anacleto’s theme with classical writing, enveloped in counterpoint and other compositional techniques, as he did with some other piano pieces, such as the folk tune Star of the Sea, which he borrowed to build Estrela Brilhante (1984). In Variações Asorovarc (2002), the composer borrows a children’s folk tune called O Cravo Brigou com a Rosa (The Clove Fought the Rose). He has claimed that the six years learning to play the accordion influenced him musically in certain ways: “I think this [my accordion training] is the popular side of my musical education, and that the communicative, popular part of my production comes from a musical past [that] began in this way.”

By the time Miranda wrote Serious Variations for wind quintet (1991), he was in his third artistic period, exploring neo-tonal devices and compositional procedures. Nevertheless, for some researchers and performers, the piece was considered a step back to tonality, as Duarte says:

Even though this set of variations was written in 1991, the work is entirely tonal. There is no evidence of fourth and tritone-fourth chords; modal, octatonic or artificial scales; nor even atonal or neo-tonal language in this piece…. Surely, Miranda was never so close to the Classical forms and language in his piano music as in this piece. … Maybe Miranda's intention in this piece was simply to write beautiful music.

Disagreeing with Duarte, Miranda actually exclaims that he composed his Serious Variations in the pathway of the “new romanticism,” another name for neo-tonality. The work

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30 Ronaldo Miranda, interview by author, June 2, 2021.
31 “Asorovarc” is an anagram of “Cravorosa”, both characters of the Brazilian folk tune. Additionally, this piece is written for “cravo,” that means “harpsichord,” one other play with the name.
may sound tonal for most listeners, but the liberties taken throughout the piece, says the
composer, do not belong to tonal music, as will be observed soon in this chapter.

Overall, the composer is very detailed in the dynamic and tempo markings, in the
indications of mood (always in Portuguese), agogic markings, and in the articulation. Fingerings
are not indicated, and the pedal is only marked once, at the end of the transition to Variation II.
Although Miranda does not use key signatures, the work is predominantly in the key of B minor
and modulates to E minor, D minor, and C minor, among several “Wagnerian modulations,” to
use his own words. 34 The ten variations, either based on or distantly inspired by the tune, display
meter changes, varied forms, contrasting moods, a tonal center, and different techniques, ranging
from alternated and broken chords and octaves, to tremolos and big leaps on the keyboard. A
frequent trait is the presence of the sub-mediant - dominant chords in the endings.

All variations are connected and intended to be played without long caesuras. The
analysis of each of the movements will investigate the form and compositional technique, while
giving performers some relevant suggestions to interpret the piece and resolve issues by offering
tips about the positioning of the hands and fingering.

**Theme**

- Key: B minor, but no key signature; time 4/4 (as usual in schottisches)
- *Com expressão* (expressive), \( j = 66 \) – not in rigid tempo, rather, *rubato*
- Unitarian Form: 8 m. (1-8) – the theme is presented on Piano I (4 m. antecedent + 4 m. consequent) + 8 m. (9-16) – theme shared between Pianos I and II (antecedent on Piano II, consequent on Piano I, in broken octaves on the right hand)

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• Closing zone: 3 m. (17-19) establishing the chords VI-V-i, ending in a PAC. These chords will end most of the variations and transitions

• Dynamics: ranges from \( p \) to \( f \), ending in \( pp \). It is mostly in \( mf \)

Miranda borrows section “A” from \textit{Yara} to present his theme. “Anacleto’s theme… contains a world of feelings and emotional reference that allowed me to plan a great variety of approaches and atmospheres, from the \textit{carioca} music with a flavor of serenades (and of Portuguese origins) to the fancy, almost circus-like, performances of the hinterland bands.” \textsuperscript{35}

The theme is melancholic and gives room to a rhythmic liberty, as in a \textit{modinha}. A contrapuntal and polyphonic writing embellishes the melody in both piano parts. Piano II presents the typical \textit{baixaria} (see definition on Chapter 2) of the seven-string guitar on the left hand. The harmonic structure is mostly based on the tonic, subdominant, and dominant of B minor, quickly modulating to the relative key of D major in m 5-6:

m. 1-8:  i | iv | V | i | ii of D major – V | I -- i of B minor | iv – V | i ||

Five specific elements of the theme will be explored throughout variations: the syncopation of the beginning (motive “a”), the harmonic sequence of the consequent phrase (D major: \( ii – V | I – i \) of B minor | iv – V | i ||), the eighth note motive on m. 2 (motive “b”), the other eighth note motive at the end of the antecedent and consequent phrases (motive “c”), and the cantabile motive on m. 5-6 on Piano II (motive “d”).

A comparison between the two texts of \textit{Yara} demonstrates the treatment Miranda gave to the tune: he changes the repeated two eighth notes to a quarter-note producing a syncopation (motive “a”) and embellishes the end of m.1 with duple grace-notes. He also modifies the melody on the last measure of the theme (motive “c”). Examples no. 3 and 5 highlight the

\textsuperscript{35} Ronaldo Miranda, booklet of the “Duo Bretas-Kevorkian” CD, Rio de Janeiro, June 2002.
motives that serve as compositional devices for Miranda, the harmonic sequences, and the differences between the two texts (antecedent and consequent phrases of the theme, respectively):

Example 2. Anacleto de Medeiros, Yara. Part A, m. 1-4

Example 3. Ronaldo Miranda, Serious Variations. Theme, m. 1-4

Starting on the first measure, pianists must be careful to make sure all the notes are played. To allow the left hand of the pianist on Piano I to play all the notes, the pianist on Piano II must lift his right hand very quickly, immediately after playing the notes marked with an arrow in example 3, above.

On examples 4 and 5 is possible to see the modification of the last measure of Anacleto’s consequent phrase. The arrows refer, as will always refer in this study, to the need of one pianist lifting one hand quickly to allow the other pianist to play a same pitch:
Starting on m. 9-16, Piano II plays the antecedent phrase of the theme, while Piano I draws ascending and descending duple notes all articulated in two-note slurs, a beautiful hands ballet. The consequent phrase will come back to Piano I decorated in sixteenth notes.

From this point on, Miranda’s theme (i.e., the part A of Anacleto’s *Yara* elaborated by Miranda) will be simply referred as “the theme.”

**Variation I – a rhythmic variation**

- Key: B minor; 3/4 time, a radical change
- *Allegro*, $J = 144$, more than twice as fast than the theme
- Simple Binary form (|| A :|| B || Closing zone):
  
  Part A, 11 m. (20-30) - starts in B minor, finishes in the dominant chord, has a repeat sign.
Part B, 16 m. (31-46) – first period of 8 m. (31-38) + second period of 8 m. with a modified ending (39-46)

- Closing zone: 2 m. (47-48) reinforcing the use of the VI – i (plagal cadence)
- Dynamics: ranges from $p$ to $ff$, ending in $f$. It is mostly in $f$

Part A - in this contrasting variation, it surprises the listener for its humor, featured by the delicate grace notes, the *staccato*, and the rests. It is distant from the theme and much faster, with no place for *rubatos*. The $F$b of the first measures can be understood, enharmonically, as $E#$ - raised $4^{th}$s of the key, one of the frequent characteristics in Miranda’s work. Here, the author chooses to label the $F$ a lowered $7^{th}$ of the raised VI chord ($G# B D F#$):


Vigorous chords in both hands end this part in $ff$. On Piano I, m. 26-27, 29, it is interesting to accentuate more the syncopated chords to match what is on Piano II, i.e., a *staccato* followed by the syncopation. Before the half-cadence at the end of this section, Miranda embellishes it with the Fr$^6$ chord, where the F is understood as an E$^#$:
Part B - presents a very lyric melody on Piano II that modifies the cantabile motive “d” of the theme and allows more rhythmic liberty. Piano I must be delicate and diligently obey the two-note slurs to differ from the longer slurs that occur on the second period. It has the harmonic sequence of the consequent phrase: D major: ii – V | I – VI of B minor | iv – V | I || which is repeated.

Pianists should stress the rall on m. 43 to suddenly come back to the A tempo on m. 44, where Miranda briefly retakes the humorous staccato writing of Part A:
On measure 46, Piano I cites motive “c.” A plagal cadence closes the variation:

A short transition (49-50), *Com expectativa* (with expectation), in 4/4 time and \( \frac{\text{J}}{=69} \), is also built on the sub-mediant and dominant chords of B minor (VI-V) to lead to the next variation. Here, Piano II has the sole pedal marking of the entire piece, but the pianist must
balance it with the *staccatos* that occur at the same time. One suggestion is to use the pedal only for the fourth beat of Piano I, with the *fermata*, as in the following example:

Example 11. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Transition to Var. II, m. 49-50

![Example Sheet Music]

**Variation II – a melodic variation**

- B minor; 3/4 time, as the first variation
- *Lírico* (lyric); ♩ = 84
- Unitarian form: 8 m. (51-58) – Piano I presents a melodic variation of the antecedent phrase + 11 m. (59-69) – Piano II modifies the consequent phrase
- Closing zone: 2 m. (68-69) prolonging the end in the tonic
- Dynamics: ranges from *p* to *f*. It is mostly in *mp*

Piano I - the cascades on the right hand (51-58), all initiated by passing tones (fourths or ninths), can be seen as an allusion to motive “c” of the theme. This is a melancholic variation that is free from rigidity. Piano II accompanies with a modified harmonic sequence of the antecedent by modulating to D major. The harmony changes every two measures:
Example 12. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. II, m. 51-54

The pianist on Piano I must be careful and lift his left hand immediately after playing the two last eighth notes, since the right hand of his partner plays those same notes as a harmonic interval immediately afterwards. See the arrows on Ex. 12, above.

The climactic point happens on m. 57, concluding the amplified antecedent in a PAC on D major. Piano I should be very expressive, giving time to the opened rolled chord on Piano II (see Example 13).

Piano II takes over and presents a cantabile motive in ascending thirds that dialogues with Piano I in a beautiful continuation of the motive.

Example 13. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. II, m. 57
On m. 65-69, Miranda uses altered even chords before the final IAC in B minor. The different articulation of both Pianos is noteworthy and produces a beautiful effect:


A short transition (70-72) is built on the submediant G7, altered by the added notes (C# and F#). Miranda indicates *Buliçoso* (♩ = 100), a very Brazilian term which means restless, frantic. Pianists must move the agogic by doing an *accelerando* leading to the *fermata* (m. 72) to produce a stronger effect. The *fermata*, in turn, must be held until the first beat of Variation III.

**Variation III – a rhythmic-decorative variation**

- Key: B minor; 4/4 time – back to the quaternary
- *Obstinado* (obstinate), ♩ = 92 - opposed to the lyricism of the previous variation
• Unitarian Form: 4 m. (73-76) – the antecedent phrase is embroidered in sixteenth notes on Piano II and then, on Piano I + 4 m. (77-80) – the consequent phrase is presented on Piano I with the same embroidery

• Dynamics: ranges from $mp$ to $ff$. It is mostly in $mf$

With only 8 measures, this is the shortest variation, pairing with Variation IV. The theme is dissolved in a continuous movement of sixteenth notes that ascend and descend on the keyboard, passing from Piano II to Piano I with a homorhythmic accompaniment in eighth notes that resembles wind-bands. A very strict rhythmic pulse contrasts with the previous variation:

Example 15. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. III, m. 73-74

The harmonic structure is almost identical to the theme:

B minor: i | iv | V | i | iv/ ii of D major – V | I – IV | vii/ ii of B minor – V | i ||

The delicate *staccato* touch and even sixteenth notes are crucial to interpret this variation (and Variation IV). The choice of fingerings must take into account the agility and softness required in this kind of writing. Although this author agrees with Debussy when he wrote, in the foreword of his Etudes, “a predefined fingering cannot, obviously, suit all the many different shapes of hands,” 36 she considers it useful to provide readers with a few fingering suggestions:

For the consequent phrase on Piano II, pianist Josiane Kevorkian suggests rhythmic pedals to value the quarter notes slurs on the bass (m. 77-78) and the short slurs on Piano I (m. 79-80). See, on the example below, the pedaling suggestions marked on Piano II (left hand only):

A short bridge (m. 81) in 2/4 time, between Variations III and IV prepares the modulation to E minor with the dominant chord on its second inversion. It leads to an *attacca*.

**Variation IV – a rhythmic-decorative variation**

- Key: E minor; 4/4 time – first variation centered in another key
- *L’istesso tempo* (the same tempo), \( \boxed{\downarrow} = 92 \)
- Unitarian Form: 8 m. (82-89) – Piano II presents the entire theme
• Dynamics: ranges from *mp* to *f*. It is mostly in *mf*

This variation is so similar to the previous variation that it seems like a continuation of it. As in Variation III, a rhythmic rigor is required. The harmonic structure is practically the same as in the theme: E minor: i | iv | V | i | iv – V of G major | I – vi/i of E minor | V | i |

Piano I keeps the same homorhythmic accompaniment on the left hand as in variation III and maintains the embroidered texture of variation III in sixteenth notes. The left hand must cross, in m. 82-83, over the right hand. Piano II presents the entire theme on the right hand in legato, while the left hand has a *pizzicato*, in a very beautiful combination. Therefore, pedal is practically not used in this variation. See example below:

Example 18. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. IV, m. 82-83

Two thrills embellish this piano part (m. 86-87). The following example shows only Piano I with the pedal markings (of Piano II). The fingering suggested can be a solution for some pianists:
Although the *pizzicato* dictates no pedal on this variation, three pedaling marks are necessary: m. 86-87 (on the example above) and at the two final beats of the variation, to help pianists produce a crescendo (see Piano II on the example below):

Variation V – a harmonic-melodic variation

- Keys: very modulatory; 4/4 time
- *Sonhador* (in English, dreamy),  \( \text {\textit{j}} = 63 \), contrasting with the previous two variations
- Simple Binary form (A|B): the center of the piece: Th I II III IV- V -VI VII VIII IX X
  - Part A, 8 m. (90-97) – this part starts and finishes in C major, modulates to G major, E\(^b\) major, B\(^b\) major. Then, to the distant B major, and descending thirds: G major, E major, C major, A major
Part B, 12 m. (98-109) – this part starts in E♭ major, modulates to C minor, E♭ major, a sequence that is repeated. It finishes in C minor

- Dynamics: ranges from p to f. It is mostly in mf

This is an emotional variation; according to Miranda, it has a Portuguese flavor of the serenades (see chapter 2), where some *rubatos* are very welcome. The modulations abound, almost as in a Wagnerian work. It is the only variation in a major key and the first that cites the part B of Anacleto’s theme. It is connected to the theme as much as it is to Variation X.

Part A, antecedent phrase (90-93): Piano II starts alone by citing, rhythmically, the syncopated motive “a” of the theme, here, with an upward movement. On m. 91 and 93, the motive “b” is alluded too. The raised fourths (m. 1 and 3, right hand) are not exceptions in this work (see Variation I).


Part A, consequent phrase (94-97): Piano I realizes, rhythmically, the consequent phrase of the theme, which is finished by Piano II. Harmonically, it modulates by descending thirds: B, G, E, C, A, followed by four chords on D♭ C E C (all in major modes).
Part B can be divided into three phrases. In the first (98-101), the accompaniment on Piano II realizes a kind of a slow *Alberti bass* on the right hand. Piano I cites, for the first time in this work, section B of Anacleto’s theme. Miranda enriches the second half of Anacletos’s part B by varying the intervals melodically:

Example 22. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. V, m. 98-101

Example 23. Anacleto de Medeiros, *Yara*. Part B, m. 9-12 (compare to Ex. 22)

Part B, second phrase (102-105): while Piano II accomplishes a *Bachian* harmonic progression, Piano I has an interesting descending passage of two-note slurs in ninths. Miranda did not intend to highlight the thumbs to shape the implied melody (\(g f e^b d c b^b a^b g\) | \(f e^b d c b^b a^b g f\)), knowing that, unconsciously, it would be heard.\(^\text{37}\) Thus, it is advisable to obey the

\(^{37}\) Ronaldo Miranda, interview by author, June 2, 2021.
obvious fingering (5—1 on right hand and 1—5 on left hand) to keep his intention of interpolating the melody between hands through these ninths. Here, below, is the implied melody, highlighted in red, an allusion to motive “d” of the theme:

Example 24. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. V, m. 102-105.1

![Example 24](image)

Part B, third phrase (106-109): it is a passionate variation of the former phrase, keeping the bass of Piano II and adding decorative broken thirds in the middle voice of Piano I. The passage starts on the strong beat, unlike the second phrase, in which the ninths begin after an eighth note rest. Here, below, the upper voice on Piano I (compare to the implied melody on the example 24):


![Example 25](image)
This variation catches all the attention for its dreamy mood, the use of Anacleto’s section B, the unexpected modulations, and the passion that emerges since the crescendo of m. 105 rapidly leading to its climax on m. 106, which deserves a good agogic movement. It is noteworthy that the variation begins in a major key and ends in minor, as if returning to the dream.

A longer transition (110-115), *Com expectativa*, in 4/4 time, and \( \frac{\text{♩}}{4} = 80 \), starts on Piano II exploring motive “c” played on the previous bar on Piano I (m. 109, right hand).

The sixteenth notes outline the same notes alternated between hands (octaves alternated with simple notes). Piano I initially responds as with question marks in the quarter notes. Then, it joins Piano II, in unison, in a difficult passage that has an *affrettando e crescendo*. Pianists may think of a more audacious accelerando and of a *subito ritenuto* on the very last beats of Piano II (m. 115). In other words, this transition gains more energy in radically speeding up than in making a progressive accelerando. Pianists must let their left hand guide the right hand.

The pianist on Piano I can benefit from practicing this passage by combining two fingers at a time (left hand + thumb of right hand, left hand + fifth finger of right hand), as fast as he can. To play the alternated octaves will, then, seem much easier.

Example 26. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Transition to VI, m. 110-112
**Variation VI – a rhythmic variation**

- **Key**: B minor; 4/4 time
- **Incisivo** (incisive, sharp), $J = 104$, contrasting with Variation V
- **Unitarian Form**: 8 m. (116-123) – Piano II presents, alone, the entire theme on the left hand (antecedent and consequent phrases) + 8 m. (124-131) – Piano I takes the theme over in the counter-beats with the right hand + 1 m. (132) that extends the B minor with the recurrent chords VI – V – i
- **Dynamics**: ranges from *mp* to *f*. It is mostly in *mp*

This variation is the most harmonically and structurally akin to the theme (a theme that is repeated), although it is very straightforward in tempo and opposed in mood. It is a restless variation, with no room for *rubatos*. The harmonic structure is exactly the same as in the theme.

The alternate writing (as in the transition that precedes this variation) is all in *staccato*. Piano II presents the theme and replaces the syncopation (motive “a”) by the Anacleto’s repeated notes (left hand, m. 116.1, 118.1). Despite the *crescendo to f*, overall, it is a soft passage contrasted with the occasional interjections in *marcato* basses in octaves, in *mf*:

Example 27. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. VI, m. 116-118
Piano I is tacet during the first eight measures, but takes over the theme very interestingly in the last eight measures, realizing it in the counter-beats. Though not typical in Brazilian music, Miranda does it masterfully. Piano II realizes the bassline and maintains the same texture (see example 28, below).

Miranda closes this variation with the recurrent chords VI – V | i.

Example 28. Ronaldo Miranda, Serious Variations. Var. VI, m. 124-125

Variation VII – a melodic variation

- Keys: very modulatory, but it is mostly in B minor
- 5/4 time – first variation in 5 beats
- Tranquilo (quiet, peaceful), J = 56, contrasting with Variation VI
- Unitarian Form: 4 m. (133-136) – Piano II begins the variation alone, to be completed by Piano I + 4 m. (137-140) – Piano I continues the melodic contour in unison + 4 m. (141-144) – Piano I varies the melodic line
- Closing zone - 2 m. (145-146) with the recurrent chords in plagal cadence: i – VI7 | i
- Dynamics: ranges from mp to f. It is mostly in mf
This is the third variation that Piano II starts alone. It is ethereal and peaceful, similar to the dreamy fifth variation.

First phrase, m. 133-136 - Kevorkian said that the two first measures are difficult to interpret, for the strong beats on the left hand of Piano II are scarce and the weak parts of the beats are syncopated. The fact that the phrase is in 5/4 time also contributes to this feeling of unbalance. The texture is polyphonic and full of dotted notes (a unique feature in this work).

The harmonic structure is: B minor i – iv| V – i | E minor V – i | F# major V – I/ V of B minor ||.

On m. 133-134, Piano II presents a melody in legato which cites the motive “c” of the theme. The harmonic sequence is the same of the antecedent phrase (here, shortened from four to two measures). After this, it has no melodies to shape but accompaniment. The syncopated sixteenth notes make this variation distinct, and it is essential that the pianist play them with precision.

Piano I completes the phrase on m. 135-136 by exploring the same motive “c.”

Example 29. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. VII, m. 133-134

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38 Josiane Kevorkian, interview by author, June 5, 2021.
Second phrase: in unison, Piano I varies the melody presented of m. 133-134, making large leaps between fingers in both hands as they keep the legato. Piano II is most stable without the syncopations, playing all beats and adding ornaments, such as rolled chords and sixteenth notes in the bass. This phrase is modulatory (B minor i – IV\textsuperscript{+3} | D major V – I | C major V—I | B minor V – i ||) and marches on a descending circle of fifths on Piano II, left hand:


Third phrase: maintains the *Bachian* sequence of the theme’s consequent that is present since the second phrase of this variation:

D major ii – V | I – IV | B minor ii – V | i ---- | i – VI\textsuperscript{7} | i ||

The pianist on Piano I will not regret deciding to play the beginning of m. 141 with the left hand, which helps the voicing delivered on m. 140 by the same left hand. The right hand can take over on the third beat of measure 141, yielding to the left on the third beat of 142. These suggestions take into account the legato of this melodic line, the direction, and the big leaps that are encountered here:
Example 31. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. VII, m. 139-142

There are two spots (m. 143-144) where pianists may have ensemble issues (Piano II, right hand and Piano I, left hand). Overall, the melody of this variation is based on the motive “c” of the theme, literally cited before the plagal cadence.

It is worth noting the detailed articulations that Miranda writes on Piano I, either on the two-note slurs or four-note slurs accompanied by the counterpoint of Piano II. Such articulations are clearly obeyed in wind instruments, and pianists should be inspired by listening to them, trying to do the same.

Example 32. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. VII, m. 143-145.1
Variation VIII – a rhythmic variation

- Keys: also very modulatory, but it is mostly in B minor

- 3/8 | 5/8 time: alternated time signatures. 3/4 time in three sections

- *Brilhante* (bright), \( \text{\textit{j}} = 144 \), contrasting with the previous variation

- Amplified Ternary form (A :|| B A’|| closing zone) –

  Section A, 12 m. (147-158) - repeated, starts in B minor, modulates to C major, and finishes in B minor dominant chord

  Section B, 24 m. (159-182) – amplified, divided into two sub-parts that change the harmony every two measures: 12 m. (159-170) - A minor, E major, G minor, D major + 12 m. (171-182) - F major, A minor, Bb major / V7 of Eb major. This sub-part finishes on the dominant of B minor preceded by altered vii\(^7\) harmony

  Section A’, 40 m. (183-222) – even more amplified, divided into three sub-parts: 18 m. (183-200) – recapitulates section A with added notes on Piano I + 22 m. (201-222) – modified and very amplified section that starts with a sequence of V-I on F major, F\(^#\) major, G major in 3/4 time. Then, an interpolation between VI -i modulates to C major on m. 218 (lowered II of B minor) and produces a PAC

- Closing zone, 4 m. (221-224) – recurrent chords (VI – altered V (V\(^4\)) | i) followed by the connection bars, and lead immediately to the following variation

  The “amplified ternary” (A :|| B A’||) is Miranda’s own analysis; however, the author sees this variation as a rondo form: A :|| A’| B| A”| B’| A”’| Closing zone|| Respectively: (A m. 147-158 :|| A’ m. 159-170 | B m. 171-182 | A” m. 183-200 | B’ m. 201-206 | A”’ m. 207-220 | Closing zone m. 221-224||). This is a very personal analysis that looks at textures, not cadences, and will be used here to ease the approach to studying the variation
• Dynamics: ranges from $p$ to $ff$. It is mostly in $mf$

Variation VIII is the largest and most complex in structure. Likewise, it is the most brilliant and playful of all the ten variations.

The melody is angular and built in eighth notes atomically spread on the staves, as this author likes to say, due to the big jumps and staccatos. Some basses are not drawn on the root position of the chords, giving an interesting feeling of suspended tonality. The mood is circus-like, band-like, all in staccato touch, alternating 3/8 and 5/8 all the time, except for the sections in 3/4.

In this breathtaking variation, Miranda skillfully crafts the effects, phraseology (diminutions, augmentations), ensemble fitting, surprising modulations, contrasting dynamics, the constant time changes, and accentuated notes. For pianists, in general, this is the highest point of the piece.

Section A is very similar to the opening of Variation I, for it plays with the same i and altered iv chords ($\#iv – G^# B D E^# = F$) in B minor. Both are in staccato, have the same (144) tempo, and have the repeat sign. Additionally, both parts A of each variation finish on the dominant chord. One can state that variations I and VIII are cousins.

Section A modulates to C major and ends on the dominant of B minor. The pedaling suggested on example 33 is to just support the quarter notes but must never hinder the staccato character of this variation.

The following examples demonstrate the similar harmonies and character between variations VIII and I. It is worth noting that the chords are on Piano II on Variation VIII, but their pairs are played on Piano I on the first variation:
Section A’ is similar to A rhythmically, but differs harmonically, changing every three measures. The basses follow a descending chromatic line, by alternating root and first inversion positions. The pianists can color this beautiful section in two dynamics, \textit{mp} on m. 159, and \textit{p} on m. 165. It is \textit{sweeter} than section A due to its beautiful harmonic descendent progression:
Sections B and B’ present an ambiguity in tempo that is also present in Miranda’s Piano Concertino, second movement: as the time signature is 3/4, the marcato signs (>) are placed on the first and fourth eighth notes of each measure for both pianists, clearly resulting in a 6/8 time effect. Miranda says that he expects pianists to “think in 3/4” and, at the same time, obey the marcato signs. The Bretas-Kevorkian duo resolved this ambiguity simply by letting the Piano I stress a bit more the 5th eight note of the right hand, not ignoring any of the requested accentuated notes, as Piano II has a rest on the fifth eighth note. This will help interpreters perceive this passage as being in 3/4 time.

Some interpreters neglect the 3/4 time signature and claim that the composer actually wants 6/8. However, the 3/4 time is very explicit in m. 179-182:
Still on the example above, Miranda’s uses enharmony to transform a Bb into A# to reach the dominant harmony of B minor at the end of the section.

Section A” differs from A by the embellishment of the first beat of every three measures. Instead of a simple *staccato* note, Miranda uses a triad on Piano I on the right hand.

Section B’ (m 201-206) also evidences the ambiguity in time as encountered in section B. The pianist on Piano II maintains the accentuation (> of a typical 6/8 time, while the pianist on Piano I has no accentuation on the fourth eighth notes in every other measure, allowing him to think this passage in 3/4, as the composer wishes:

Example 38. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. VIII, m. 201-204

Section A”” (m. 207-215) is so labelled because it is rhythmically similar to A. The harmonies encountered are: m. 207-209 alt VI (#VI) | m. 210-212 i | m. 213-215 alt VI (#G) ||.
This variation is very contrasting in dynamics, restless, all in *staccato*, and reaches its climactic point on measure 220, the end of a PAC in B minor, where pianists can anticipate the *ff* just marked on m. 221-222.

Example 39. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. VIII, m. 219-222

The *rall molto* of m. 221-222 prepares to decrease the tempo from $\frac{\text{♩}}{} = 144$ (or $\frac{♪}{\text{♩}} = 288$) to $\frac{♩}{♪} = 60$. The connecting measures, in turn, prepare pianists to the next variation, leading to a D minor dominant chord and to a radical change in mood.

**Variation IX – a harmonic-melodic variation**

- Key: D minor, 4/4 time. On m. 241-242, 6/4
- *Apaixonado* (passionate), $\frac{♩}{♩} = 52$, contrasting with the previous variation
- Unitarian form: 17 m. (225-241) – First phrase, 4 m. (225-228) – starts in D minor,
and ends on the dominant of D minor + Second phrase, 13 m. (229-241) – begins by following the established sequence of the first phrase and amplifies it to an ongoing long enchainment

- Closing zone, 3 m. (241-243) – elliptical

- Dynamics: ranges from p to f. It is mostly in mf.

This variation is very romantic and rich in its polyphonic and contrapuntal treatment.

The first phrase is a dialogue based on motive “a”, while a sequence of dominants of dominants (V/ V) executes a descend harmonic line. Starting on m. 225: | D minor i – G V of C | C7 V of F – F V of Bb | Bb – E V of A | V05 V of A | A V of D minor ||.

The second phrase is an ingenious amplification of the first, to the point of exhaustion. A descendent bassline, mostly in half notes, follows the circle of fifths (V/V) in a melodic-harmonic progression. Starting on m. 229, the bassline looks like this: D – G | C- F | Bb-E | A-D | G - C | F - Bb | Eb-A | D-G | C-F||. Then, it is shortened into quarter notes: m. 238: Bb- E A - D ||. The long chain of dominants emphasizes the ongoing mood of the variation. It is a passionate variation, which means that pianists can employ their best efforts to realize the climax on m. 229-230. The next example shows the beginning of this variation and highlights the polyphonic use of motive “a”, with the same rhythmic figures and modified intervals:

Example 40. Ronaldo Miranda, Serious Variations. Var. IX, m. 225-226
In a beautiful discant, Piano II alludes motive “d” on the climax measures.
The following example illustrates the beginning of the second phrase, including, on m. 331-332, arrows that indicate that pianist on Piano I must lift his fifth finger very quickly to allow his partner’s right hand to play immediately after:

Example 41. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. IX, m. 229-232

Example 42. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. IX, m. 239
On m.239 (see example 42) it will never be too much to ask pianists to descend to the “deepest ground” (that is, as pp as possible) and build a sudden crescendo on the short space of that measure. The arrow shows one spot where one of the pianists must quickly lift his hand.

On m. 241, the variation ends in ellipsis with the closing zone that, in turn, ends on the dominant chord of B minor.

Miranda explores the motive “c” of the theme, which begins on Piano II with the right hand, passing to Piano I, left hand, and then right hand. Miranda transcribed these three citations of motive “c” from the clarinet, the oboe, and the flute, respectively. All parts are, then, followed by a forte unison in two-note slurs on the same three hands (see example 43).

On m. 243, pianists can breathe between the two last chords (see the example above) to emphasize the fermata and get ready for the tour de force of the last variation.

Example 43. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. IX, m. 241-243
Variation X - a rhythmic-melodic variation

- Key: B minor; 5/4 time, as in Variation VII
- *Enérgico* (vigorous, energetic), \( \dot{J} = 84 \)
- Simple Binary form (|| A :|| B || Closing zone):
  
  Part A, 8 m. (244-251) - starts and finishes in B minor, tonic chord
  
  Part B, 10 m. (252-262) – first phrase of 4 m. (252-255) is very important. Miranda inserts part B of Anacleto’s theme + second phrase of 4 m. (256-259) – varies the theme of m.106-107 + 2 m. (260-262.1) – virtuosic measures to lead to the closing zone
  
  Closing zone – 3 m. (262-264) – this ends the piece in *ff*, built on the recurrent VI – i chords of B minor, plagal cadence
  
  Dynamics: ranges from *p* to *ff*, ending in *ff*. It is mostly in *mf*

This exquisite variation is technically the most difficult and is infused with the sound of many hinterland Brazilian bands. Miranda explores this atmosphere on Variations I, III, and IV, but none of them can compare to the tenth.

Although totally contrasting in mood, this last variation has two themes in common with Variation V.

The texture is dense, with octaves on both pianos and shorter figurations in chords or harmonic intervals. Pianists must make every effort to carefully differentiate the eighth notes *legato* from the counter-beats in sixteenth notes *staccato*.

The pedal is necessary but must only be applied to strengthen quarter notes, half notes at the end, or to help a difficult *legato*. This is a *staccato* variation.

Part A (244-251) - The physical position is an issue because both pianists must displace to the lower region of the keyboard to start the low tune in unison, which begins with a “shade” of the syncopated motive (motive “a” modified rhythmically). 

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The tune maintains the harmonic sequence of the antecedent phrase and progresses up the keyboard: B minor | i | i | iv | iv | V V | i | VI | i ||. The 5/4 time amplifies both the tune and harmonies. On Piano II, the right hand plays an accentuated single note on a weak part of the third beats that requires attention. It is more difficult than the triad that Piano I has on his right hand:

Example 44. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. X, m. 244-245

Example 45. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. X, m. 250-251
On m. 250, above, the pianist on Piano II must be careful and lift his hand quickly on the second beat. Closing this Part A, Piano II may play the last beat in ritenuto, to prepare the change of tune and separate parts A and B.

Part B (252-255) - the first phrase of this section is a big discovery for the author. Part B of Anacleto’s theme is entirely presented on Piano II, with the same intervallic modifications made by Miranda on Variation V. The sole difference is rhythmic, for Miranda modifies the figurations of the cells (instead of eighth notes, a quarter note and sixteenth notes). Anacleto’s B tune initiates a dialogue with Piano I, which presents a new musical element. The following examples display Yara’s Part B by Miranda on Variation V (example 46), and the transformation the composer did on the same tune, on Variation X (example 47).

The composer’s intention of using this tune again is almost hidden in the midst of this dense texture. Indeed, pianists who play this piece will barely notice the theme B in this passage, which, enhanced by the 5/4 time signature, hinders its clear perception. Even the composer, himself, had forgotten that he had used Anacleto’s B tune for a second time. He wrote that this passage was probably a result of “a mix of reason and intuition.”

Example 47 calls additional attention to the arrow that comes from the middle G on Piano I, indicating that the pianist has to quickly lift his hand to allow Piano II to play the same G. The pedal markings help to emphasize the syncopated quarter notes:

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40 Ronaldo Miranda, text message, June 6, 2021.
Example 46. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. V, m. 98-101

Example 47. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. X, m. 252-255 (Piano II)

On m. 255, Piano II executes another example of *baixaria*. The following fingering suggestions might be useful for this passage, for both pianists:
Part B, second phrase (256-259) - Miranda borrows, on Piano I, the second melody contained in Variation V (m. 106-107). Here, he also radically varies its rhythm and texture. The harmonies and notes of the melody, though, are fully preserved with a different ending. The examples that follow illustrate the similarity between both variations, although they are in different keys.

It is worth noting the optional fingering suggested for the pianist on Piano I to execute measures 256-257: the thirds on the first beats, right hand, can be played with fingers one and two by those who have a small hand and do not handle the octave while having to play thirds in the middle at the same time.
The last measures of the piece display challenging octaves in ascending arpeggios and a tremolo with chords on Piano I. The pianist will benefit from practicing these measures (260-261) diligently with a metronome, and by accumulating one new octave at a time, from the first octave to the last and in the tempo $\boxed{\text{♩}=84}$.

The fingering for Piano I on m. 262 can be facilitated by playing some notes with the left hand, as seen on example 51:
Finally, it is with frenetic runs of sixteenth notes stopped by long and loud chords on a final plagal cadence that Ronaldo Miranda finishes his *Serious Variations*. 

Example 51. Ronaldo Miranda, *Serious Variations*. Var. X, m. 262-264
Conclusion

Although there are many other academic papers about Ronaldo Miranda, this study reveals new data about his professional life as well as an updated list of his works. This study also highlights a remarkable characteristic encountered in Miranda’s output: the coexistence between the old and the new, form and the rupturing of form, rigid classical training and the modern language, the classical composer and his popular taste—all remarkably present simultaneously in the *Serious Variations*. Perhaps this coexistence explains Miranda’s success.

The information about Anacleto de Medeiros’s background and the musical environment in which he lived provides readers with a broader idea about the birth of the carioca popular music by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. It was very interesting to investigate how a classical composer could so masterfully create variations on a popular theme. Miranda established a perfect crossover between the popular and classical genres. With rich imagination and inspired by the great works of this genre, Miranda used the traditional technique of varying the theme by enriching the texture (counterpoint, polyphony), changing tempos, meter, rhythm, keys, timber, dynamics, form, phraseology (shortening, augmentation, alternations, insertion of new elements), contrasting different moods—all combined with his own language.

His own language, here, was debated by Miranda, who confronted a doctoral dissertation from 2002 by explaining that his *Serious Variations* does have an evident key center, but some features such as the absence of key signatures, the atomic explosion of the theme in variations I and VIII, and the several unexpected altered chords/ harmonic sequences, are reasons enough, he says, to state that this work is not tonal. As he said, neo-tonality is a proximity to tonality, but not tonality. Therefore, according to him, the language is neo-tonal.
The presence of counterpoint in *Serious Variations* is noteworthy, starting with the treatment given to the original theme. Miranda embellishes the melancholic tune by Anacleto with rich polyphonic and contrapuntal writing. Both pianos have voice leadings, and this happens throughout the variations, with the only exception being in Variation III. Kevorkian said, “The thing I seek the most in this piece is to show the counterpoint. Ronaldo is very rhythmic, but also contrapuntal to the maximum.”

A pertinent question, always made when it comes to transcriptions, is: should pianists seek to imitate the instruments of the original version? The answer is that it is advisable they listen to the original version and think about it. When Bretas-Kevorkian played *The Rite of Spring*, or *Carmina Burana*, they examined the original scores and listened attentively to good recordings to form their own strategy to achieve the composers’ aspirations with the respective piano versions. However, as *Serious Variations* is so perfectly transcribed for piano and so pianistic, Miranda assumes that pianists play this piece without any concern regarding the reproducing the sound of the wind instruments. In fact, the piano has more possibilities, in some respects: the tempos, for instance, can be faster, the brilliance and sharpness can be more accentuated, and the pedal can make a huge difference in obtaining more bold effects.

The ensemble issues with appropriate hand positions are thoroughly reviewed in this paper. Pianists must always settle where and when each one must take off his hand so that all the notes are actually performed.

The same is valid for the agogic interpretation of this piece, so rich in *rubatos*. The nostalgic *choro*, *modinha*, and *fado* were never played straight in tempo, as in a march. In that kind of repertoire, as seen in Chapter 2, there is plenty of room for *rubatos* - that weeping style used for playing the tunes. Likewise, in this piece the theme and slow variations demand a freer
tempo and an agogic agreement between pianists that establishes where to make use of *rubatos* (or *affretandos*), and to which extension.

An interesting point investigated in this study regards Miranda’s ability to build such fast and rhythmic variations out of a nostalgic tune, and, at the same time, how he turned them melancholic in their essence. The composer always has a place to recall his lyricism, so intrinsic to his soul. A look at Variation I shows a romantic part B, as well as its paired variation, Variation VIII, in the B sections. Variation IV brings out the tune in *legato*, and Variation X inserts part B of Anacleto’s tune, in the midst of all those band-like writings.

In his *Serious Variations*, Miranda facilitates the ensemble work for the duos because there neither piano dominates or takes precedence over the other. The counterpoint, several dialogues, and voice leading moving from one pianist to the other demonstrate the perfect balance between both pianists and reinforce the idea that they should play as one. Kevorkian emphasizes that “A four hands piano duo, more than a two pianos duo, should function as if they had one brain, not two, as if a single person played not with two hands, but with four.” This is what happens in this piece.

*Variações Sérias Sobre um Tema de Anacleto de Medeiros - Piano a Quatro Mãos*, celebrates and honors Maestro Anacleto, the popular and nostalgic *chorão*. Departing from a simple, symmetric, and sad tune, Miranda revealed the *carioca* musical soul and its emotional feelings through a neo-tonal language that, brilliantly, also portrays excitement, happiness, joy, and the humorous band characteristics. It is, definitely, a piece worth playing and being known by audiences everywhere.

For a further study, the author suggests an accurate comparison between the two versions of these variations. It might be useful to analyze the differences between them and to which extent pianists should or should not seek to reproduce the sonorities of the wind instruments.
Appendix. Score of *Serious Variations – Piano for Four Hands*

"VARIAÇÕES SÉRIAS"

-sobre um tema de Anacleto de Medeiros-

RONALDO MIRANDA

-piano a quatro mãos-

1931/1938

Para Patrícia Brelles

Josiane Kevorkian
"VARIAÇÕES SÉRIAS"

sobre um tema de Anácleto de Medeiros -


RONALDO MIRANDA

Para Patrícia Bretas e
Joséane Kevoian

Com expressão (d = 66)
Variação IV
L'estesso tempo (d. 92)

[Music notation image]
Variação IV. L'istesso tempo (d: 92)
Variação V - Sonhador (d = 63)

Poco Più Mosso (d = 69)

em relevo
Variação VI - Incisivo (J. 104)
Variação VIII - Brilhante (L = 144)

MUSIC NOTATION
crescendo poco a poco

poco rall. (P.D.) A tempo
- I -

Lubile crescendo poco a poco

Crescendo poco a poco

96
Variação IX - Amaixonado (b. 52)

MÚSICAS E INSTRUMENTAIS
Variação IX - Apaixonado (J. 52)

me cantabile
Variação X - Enérgico (J. 84)

ff A tempo
Bibliography

Manuscripts


Music Scores


Sound Recordings


Interviews


Secondary Sources


Curriculum Vitae

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Patrícia Bretas graduated from the School of Music at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (EM-UFRJ) and soon moved to Paris, where she studied with Eliane Richepin. She successfully participated in the International Festivals of Annecy (France) in 1985 and 1986, and in the summer courses at Épinal (France) and Salzburg (Austria). In 1996, Bretas finished her Master’s in Piano at EM-UFRJ. Her theses was translated to German by the Max Reger Institut in Bohn, Germany.

In Brazil, as a pupil of Maria da Penha, Bretas won several important piano contests. In 1995, she was unanimously awarded the 1st Prize at the Art-livre South-American Piano Competition in São Paulo. Since then, she has been invited to record for radio, TV, as well as to participate in many important concert series.

In 1997 Bretas became faculty member at UFRJ and was Deputy-Director of Non-Graduate Courses between 1999 and 2003. She was member of jury in Piano National Contests in Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo.

She was soloist with different orchestras in Brazil – Symphonic Orchestra of Porto Alegre (OSPA), Symphonic Orchestra of the University of São Paulo (OSUSP), AEXPEM and OSN-UFF, Brazilian Symphony Orchestra (OSB), Cia Bachiana Brasileira, The String Orchestra of Juiz de Fora, Petrobrás Symphonic Orchestra (OPES). In Europe – Strakorkester Lunneved – Linköping-Sweden (conductor Mats Strand), Jihočeská Komorní Filharmonie - České Budějovice (conductor Stanislav Vavřinek), Filharmonie Hradec Králové – Hradec (conductor Leoš Svárovský), I Virtuosi di Praga – Pardubice, (conductor Oldřich Vlček), and Norrköping Symphony Orchestra - six cities (conductor Alan Buribayev).
Patricia has formed a pianistic duo with Josiane Kevorkian since 1995 - the Bretas-
Kevorkian Duo. Their CD “Bretas-Kevorkian” includes unpublished Brazilian four-hands and
two pianos works, besides the four-handed piano version of Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring.
In 2001 she formed an international violin-piano duo with the Swedish violinist Jaroslav Sonsky
to play both in Brazil and Europe, disseminating Brazilian and Czech concert music in important
theaters in Sweden, Czech Republic, Luxemburg, Denmark and Hungary, recording live
programs for the Swedish Radio, Czech Radio and Magyar Radio Bartók. In 2003 they recorded
a CD in Prague sponsored by OUROCAP, “Brazilian and Czech Music for Violin and Piano”,
launched in 2004 under the label of Radioservis. The CD received good reviews, including one
from The Strad.

In 2009 she traveled to Europe three times. In April, she played at the prestigious
Budapest International Festival with Jaroslav Sonsky. In October, she played in Germany and
Czech Republic with her piano duo. In November, she was the soloist of the Symphonic
Orchestra of Norrkoping in important theaters at six different cities, including the National
Slovak Theater in Bratislava (Slovakia) and Rudolfinum in Prague.
In 2010 her third CD – “Patrícia Bretas – piano solo”, commissioned by Ourocap, was launched
in 13 cities in Brazil. In May of 2011 it was launched in Luxembour, Berlin, and Prague In
September, she toured again in Czech Republic.

In 2012 Bretas recorded the first CD with piano and harpsichord works by the Brazilian
composer Ronaldo Miranda, “Patrícia Bretas interpreta Ronaldo Miranda,” launched in Brazil in
2013. For more than one year, she interrupted her career because of a serious breast cancer, and
came back to the stages in Europe in 2014, playing in Budapest, Prague, and Luxembour.
In 2015 the Duo Bretas-Kevorkian recorded a new CD, “Pares,” with music by Mark Hagerty
(USA) and Sergio Roberto de Oliveira (Brazil), in partnership with the cello Duo Santoro. In
2016 the duo played the Bartok’s Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, in Rio de Janeiro, and also toured in 8 cities in Europe (Czech Republic, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Hungary), premiering some Brazilian pieces for piano four-hands, including the Serious Variations.

As a graduate D.M.A. student at LSU, Patrícia Bretas has had an extensive activity as collaborative pianist, playing chamber music with several instrumentalists, singers, and ensembles. She taught piano at the Music Tree Preparatory School, in Zachary. She has been invited to be the organist of the First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge for one year.

Reviews

“Patrícia Bretas…as she played St François marchand sur les flots, from Liszt, carried off the audience, not only by the effects of her left hand, but also by her firm attacks in long distances.” (Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Dantas, from “Tribuna da Imprensa,” 25/04/2001).

“The Chopin played by Patrícia Bretas is clearly descendent from Arthur Rubinstein’s line. (...) It is not to be astonished that she stands on the front line of our pianists.” (Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Dantas, 08/09/2004).

“Her playing was a stupendous master class.” (Katrineholms - Sweden, Holger Wigetz, “Katrineholms Kuriren,” 08/02/2005).

“With a solid technique, Patrícia Bretas’s performance was very much convincing, paying attention to the form of the pieces and to the clarity.” (Gothenburg – Sweden, Lars Linge, “Lerums Tidning,” 10/02/2005).

“At the final tempo (Beethoven, Appassionata op. 57) the pianist led the piece to an incandescence degree, still more on the Presto marcial (…) It was clear, undeniable her affiliation to Arthur Rubinstein.” (Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Dantas, Tribuna da Imprensa, 15/03/2006).
“Villa-Lobos (2nd Violin Sonata) was performed tremendously skillfully. At the end soloists and ensemble joined in Mendelssohn’s Concerto for violin, piano and string orchestra. A glorious, musical, light, happy, intensive piece of music and this performance carried a stamp of the soloists’ brilliant playing and the ensemble's meritorious accompanying.” (Åtvidaberg, Sweden, Olov Backman, Östgöta Correspondenten, 14/04/2008).

“The power of Martinů’s music was succesfully and originally interpreted not only by the conductor and orchestra, but foremost by the charismatic pianist Patrícia Bretas, who gives publicity to Czech music in Brazil. She performed the Concertino excellently with a great sense of Martinů’s difficult phrasing and with a deep feeling. But it was specially Bretas’s last concert in Rudolfinum which became unforgettable, thanks to her lyrical and meditative presentation of the second movement.” (Prague, Martina Fialková, Musikuz website, 09/12/2009).

“The music tour culminated with two concerts (...) in a sold-out auditorium of the Prague Rudolfinum on Nov. 26th. and 27th. 2009. The orchestra, the conductor and the soloist presented in Prague concerts of unusual quality and were rewarded by great ovations (...). The soloist (...) was the outstanding Brazilian pianist Patricia Bretas, whose artistic achievement has been known to the Czech audiences from her many previous concerts here (...).” (Prague, Martina Fialková, Czech Dialogue Magazine, 11/12/2009).