

Dances and songs with Afro-Brazilian influence in six musical comedies by Martins Penna, staged during the illegal slave trade (1838-1846)

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Abstract

This article analyzes six musical comedies by Luiz Carlos Martins Penna, staged between 1838 and 1846, during the period of the illegal slave trade, verifying the constant use of Afro-Brazilian or European dances and songs, locally appropriated and Brazilianized, in the author's works. The text mentions how these songs and dances, initially related to the rural scene, invaded the imperial capital and the homes of the middle and upper classes of the population, starting to compete, in the public taste, with Italian and French operas and European concert music. Through musical theater, "benefit events for freedom", the press and printing shops, Martins Penna, Paula Brito, João Caetano and others promoted black culture, confronting, on an artistic level, the illegal slave trade and the powerful Portuguese smugglers who dominated the main theater of the imperial capital in the 1840s.

Keywords: musical theater; Afro-Brazilian music; Black music; comedy; slavery.

1 Introduction

Critical assertions by authors such Nascimento (1978, 2004 [1997]) e Mendes (1982), have been disseminated in articles, dissertations, theses, and books, stating that blacks in the comedies of manners by Luiz Carlos Martins Penna (1815-1848) were reduced to caricatures rather than characters, and that the author did not ideologically criticize slavery, but simply portrayed as one of the customs of his day. However, the author's comedies provoked censorship at the time for denouncing the illegal slave trade, publicly exposing powerful smugglers of the period, and for ridiculing the police apparatus responsible for repression of the enslaved (Costa-Lima Neto, 2018). This was the case, respectively, for the comedies *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista* (probable date, 1842) and *Os ciúmes de um pedestre ou o terrível*

capitão-do-mato (1845-1846), the former censored by the Chamber of Deputies, the latter by the Conservatório Dramático, both in 1845.¹

The two censored comedies, as well as several other comedies by Martins Penna, contain musical mentions inserted into the text, as well as musical and choreographic numbers performed live. What are the relationships between music and the stage, or between musical comedies and their historical context? If the author was not criticizing slavery, why was he censored more than once?

This article highlights the Afro-Brazilian or European dances and songs, locally appropriated and Brazilianized, that are present in six musical comedies by Martins Penna, evaluating their cultural, socio-political and ethnic impact in a context marked by the illegal and massive slave trade (1831-1850). I look at the relationship between music and the stage, underlining the partnership between the author and the actors-singers-dancers who performed his comedies, sometimes in benefit shows raising funds to pay for manumission of the enslaved. I also point out how the musical model of Martins Penna's comedies competed with Italian and French operas for the public's preference, reaching the second half of the 19th century by influencing comedies, operettas and the revue theater (*revista*), in parallel with the strengthening of the abolitionist movement in the country.²

2 Selected musical comedies

Except on rare occasions (Arêas, 1997; Rabetti, 2007), music historiography has tended to downplay or even ignore the role played by music in the twenty comedies written by Martins Penna, produced between 1833 and 1847. While the musicologist Ayres de Andrade, for example, wrote only a few lines regarding the period 1832-1843, "when not even one opera was performed in Rio de Janeiro" (Andrade, 1967, p. 195), the theater critic Bárbara Heliodora, in turn, gave a negative appraisal to the music and dance numbers in the comedies of Martins Penna: "gratuitous resources that create a festive atmosphere in which [...] difficulties are diluted, a lot of noise is made, there is song, and dance [...], but no real scenic or dramatic unity is achieved" (Heliodora, 1966, p. 32-43).

As will be seen in the article, between mentions in the theatrical texts, and use on stage of musical and dance numbers, the musical dramaturgy of Martins Penna presents an extensive list, including dances and songs with and without the indication of lyrics, instruments and titles of works, names of performers and composers, as well as sounds of bells and

¹ Citing the minutes of the General Legislative Assembly for 1845, Arêas noted that the comedy *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista* was censored by the Câmara dos Deputados because "a smuggler of Africans appears on stage carrying one under a basket" (Arêas, 2006, p. 202).

² This article is an expanded version of the paper I presented at the event *Teatro e escravidão: nexos, elipses e inadequações*, organized by Mariana Souto Mayor and Iris Kantor, at the University of São Paulo, in June 2023.

animals, among others. The broad collection includes Afro-Brazilian music-choreographic genres and styles (batuque, fado, lundu, muquirão, miudinho, curitiba), European dances (tirana, caxuxa, polka, quadrille, march, waltz), Italian opera arias and romantic European chamber music, as well as sacred-secular songs related to religious festivals, performed by bands of barbers and musical groups (*Divino Espírito Santo*, *Folia de Reis* and *Finados*) (Costa-Lima Neto, 2018). Far from being a “gratuitous resource”, the musical numbers in the comedies of Martins Penna set the scene for situations, contribute as a means for the individual and social characterization of the characters, dialogue with the repertoire of the actors, the horizon of the expectations of the audience, and the historical context of slavery.

2.1 *O JUIZ DE PAZ DA ROÇA* (PROBABLE DATE, 1833)

The first comedy by Martins Penna, *O juiz de paz da roça* (1833-1837), was premiered at the Teatro Constitucional Fluminense,³ on October 4, 1838, staged by the theatrical company of the actor and impresario João Caetano dos Santos – the first such company formed by a majority of Brazilian artists, not Portuguese artists (Rabetti, 2007, p. 62). Penna included, something entirely new (Ramos, 2023, p. 29), the character of an enslaved man, while he mentioned, in the theatrical text, incursions into quilombos by the police, as well as referring to “*meias-caras*”⁴ and the Valongo market, where, between 1775 and 1831, around one million enslaved Africans were sold, who had been delivered at the quay by the same name, and in the vicinity. The law of November 7, 1831 prohibited the slave trade, meaning that the Valongo market and the quay ceased operations, but since the law was not really enforce, the smuggling of human flesh continued clandestinely until 1850,⁵ coinciding with the period in which Martins Penna created his theatrical work.

In one of the scènes in *O juiz de paz da roça*, one finds the judgement of the black, Gregório, accused of giving an “*embigada*” or bump on his boss, Josefa Joaquina, at the crossing in Pau Grande.⁶ The *umbigada* is a choreographic movement characteristic of African culture, resulting from the bumping of the dancers’ bellies. In spite of the fact that it does not have a sexual connotation, the *umbigada* alluded, in the context of the comedy, to the intimate relationship between enslaved persons and their mistresses; a social taboo rarely mentioned in nineteenth-century dramaturgy (Ramos, 2023). The *umbigada* was also related to the musico-choreographic number from the finale of Penna’s comedy: a *tirana*, a Spanish dance, which,

³ Opened as the Real Teatro de São João do Rio de Janeiro, in 1813, it was renamed the Imperial Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara in 1822, the Teatro Constitucional Fluminense in 1831 and, once again, the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara in 1840. It is the current Teatro João Caetano (Souza, 2002, p. 221).

⁴ “*Meia-cara*” was the term for the African smuggled in by slave traffickers after the law of November 7, 1831, and illegally enslaved (Magalhães Jr., 1972).

⁵ The law “Eusébio de Queirós”, enacted on September 4, 1850, brought a definitive end to the slave trade in Brazil.

⁶ Pena (2007 [probable date, 1833], p. 23).

in Brazil, was mixed with the African lundu, from which it assimilated the *umbigada* (Alvarenga, 1982, p. 87-88).⁷

Martins Penna created the musical numbers of his comedies in dialogue with the repertoire of the actors and actresses who took part in them, in a similar way to a composer who composes music for a specific performer (Costa-Lima Neto, 2018).⁸ The actor became a collaborator with the author, a kind of co-author, completing his work through the scenic and musical construction of the character (Marques, 1998, p. 39). In this way, the tirana in *O juiz de paz da roça* was suited to the répertoire of the Brazilian actress and dancer Estela Sezefreda (1810-1874), for whose benefit Penna's comedy was premiered – a pioneering artist in the presentation of dances such as the lundu, the caxuxa, the fandango and the English solo on the stages of Rio de Janeiro.⁹

Penna's comedies were initially influenced by the Portuguese entremez, which consisted of "small varied acts with a central line of action, which took advantage of popular improvisational theater, added to pranks, songs and dances" (Levin, 2013, p. 184). The entremez had a jocular character and was inserted between the acts of the main play or, often, at the end of the show, usually ending with a festive musical and choreographic number.

Martins Penna adapted the model of the entremez in his first comedies, making the final song and dance numbers more Brazilian.¹⁰ The text of the comedy *O juiz de paz da roça*, published in 1842, by the Black publisher, printer and poet Francisco de Paula Brito (1809-1861), for example, includes, as final musico-choreographical number, a *fadinho*, accompanied for the tirana on the *viola*¹¹ as well as handclaps and "*caquinhos*".¹² The Afro-Brazilian *fado* or *fadinho* used in Penna's comedy should not be confused with the fado of Portugal, since it appeared in Rio de Janeiro in the 1820s, danced in the streets by the Afro-descended population, and later,

⁷ Researchers unanimously point to the African origin of the lundu, although it was sometimes become a dance "more cultivated by whites and mestizos than by blacks" (Tinhorão, *apud* Sandroni, 2001, p. 39). Segundo Mário de Andrade (1944, p. 228), the lundu was the first musical manifestation in Brazil that acquired a national status, in the nineteenth century.

⁸ Few scores of the songs from Martins Penna's comedies have been found, as most of the songs and dances referred to by the author were transmitted orally. In addition, a fire in 1851 consumed the Teatro de São Pedro, including its collection of scores and theatrical texts. See Costa-Lima Neto (2018).

⁹ For advertisements/announcements about Estela Sezefreda, see *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*: 9/11/1822; 2/10/1822; 18/01/1823; 31/10/1823; 2/3/1824; 19/10/1825; 3/12/1832; 10/08/1833; 9/06/1834; 20/08/1834; 18/02/1835; 16/01/1836; 17/02/1838; 4/10/1838.

¹⁰ As Cranmer (2012, p. 8) mentions, at the end of the eighteenth century the Portuguese entremez assimilated modinha and lundus by the Brazilian author Domingos Caldas Barbosa. These were performed by Portuguese comic actors such as the veteran Víctor Porfírio de Borja, who appears dancing lundus at the Real Teatro de São do Rio de Janeiro in the 1820s. About Borja, see Brito (1989, p. 107). It is interesting to note that, on 10/05/1846, Borja acted in the main role in Martins Penna's *As desgraças de uma criança*, with João Caetano as rehearsaler. See Cf. *Revista Dyonisos* (1966, p. 85).

¹¹ Plucked string instrument, originating from the Iberian Peninsula, appropriated locally in Brazil, where it has been very present in rural and urban areas since the 16th century (Castro, 2005).

¹² Regarding the *caquinhos*, an unconventional Afro-Brazilian percussion instrument, see Costa-Lima Neto (2020, p. 77-102).

in salons and theaters.¹³ Apparently, the word “*ganinha*”, found in the lyrics of the fado in *O juiz de paz da roça*, came from “*ngana*”, that is “lady” in Kimbundu, a language from the Bantu family, spoken in the region of Angola. The dance-song of fado probably had a moderate tempo, which accelerated as it was performed, according to the indication (“*aferventa*” – starts to boil) found in the dialogue for the judge and Manuel João.¹⁴

PLAYER (*singing*) – Gypsy, my mistress,
Most highly venerated;
The bird flew away,
And left the feathers in my hand.

ALL – If you give me food to eat,
If you give me drink to drink
If you pay for my house
I will live with you. (*They dance*)

JUDGE – That’s it, my people! Heat it up!...

MANUEL JOÃO – Boil it!

PLAYER (*singing*) – On top of that hill
There is a pineapple tree.
Theres no one in the world
Like our justice of the peace.

ALL – If you give me food to eat,
If you give me drink to drink
If you pay for my house
I will live with you. (*They dance*)

JUDGE – Boil it, boil it!...¹⁵

In 1843, one year after the text of the comedy *O juiz de paz da roça* was published by the print-shop of Paula Brito, João Caetano hired the Black actor-singer-dancer Martinho Corrêa Vasques (1822-1890) to act in his theatrical company.¹⁶ The advertisement below, published in the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, in 1844, shows that the “fado da tirana” in Penna’s comedy, probably performed by Estela and Martinho, was used to attract the theater audience to a “benefit for a freedom”, at which part of the receipts from the sale of tickets would be utilized to purchase the manumission of an enslaved person. The tickets were for sale at the house of the publisher Paula Brito, friend of the Black writer Antônio Gonçalves Teixeira e Sousa, who promoted the benefit.¹⁷

¹³ In 1825-1826, the German official Schlichthorst, traveling in Brasil, noted in his diary: “The favorite dance of the blacks is known as Fado. It consists of a movement that makes the body undulate gently and tremble, and expresses the person’s most voluptuous feelings in a way that is as natural as it is indecent” (Schlichthorst, *apud* Nery, 2004, p. 20).

¹⁴ Regarding the translation of the African word “ngano”, see Martins (2022, p. 411). In the comedy *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista* one finds a word from the Kikongo language (spoken in the region of Congo-Angola): *quenda*, meaning “to walk, to leave, to travel” (imperative). See Pena (2007 [1842], v. I, p. 188-191), Simões (2014, p. 66).

¹⁵ Pena (2007 [1842], v. I, p. 47-48).

¹⁶ *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 29/5/1843, p. 3.

¹⁷ Antônio Gonçalves Teixeira e Sousa (1812-861) is considered to be the author of the first Brazilian novel, *O filho do pescador* (1843). See Tinhorão (1998), for an analysis regarding the urban popular music in this novel.



Figure 1: “Benefit for the freedom of a slave”,
Diário do Rio de Janeiro, June 04, 1844

It is important to emphasize that Paula Brito promoted the first show “to benefit a freedom” at the Teatro Constitucional Fluminense, on October 7, 1838, only three days after the premiere of *O juiz de paz da roça*, with both plays being staged by the dramatic company of João Caetano. Benefits “for a freedom” continued to be presented for fifty years, until 1888, when slavery was abolished in Brazil. After the deaths of Brito and João Caetano, in the 1860s, these benefits almost disappeared, but returned little by little, promoted by the company of the Portuguese-Brazilian actor and impresario Jacinto Heller (1834-1909), former member of the company of João Caetano.¹⁸ With the abolitionist campaign of the 1870s and 1880s there was an increasing number of lecture-concerts, alternating a part with lectures with another part that was artistic (Alonso, 2015). The on-stage liberation of enslaved men and women became the rule.

Just as the model for benefits “for a freedom” promoted by Paula Brito, was modified over time, but was not lost, the Afro-Black musical finale for *O juiz de paz da roça* influenced important genres of musical theater in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as the operetta parody *Orfeu na roça* (libretto by Francisco Corrêa Vasques and musica by Manoel Joaquim Maria), premiered in 1868, ending with a “Fado Brasileiro” (Magaldi, 2004, p. 105-112). The Black playwright and comedian Francisco Corrêa Vasques (1839-1892) was one of the artists with the most active participation in the abolitionist campaign (Farias, 2022), while

¹⁸ For the shows to benefit Freedom promoted by Heller and his dramatic Company in the 1870s, see *Jornal do Commercio*, 1/8/1872; 27/5/1873; 3/3/1875; *Gazeta de Notícias*, 12/6/1878. About the connections between Heller, the jongo and the campaign for abolition, see Souza (2009).

his older brother, Martinho Corrêa Vasques, already mentioned above, was the artist who participated for the longest period of time in the “benefits for a freedom”, between 1844 and 1870.¹⁹

In addition to the famous operetta parody *Orfeu na roça*, by Vasques, I would also mention, as an example of a piece influenced by the scenic-musical model of *O juiz de paz da roça*, the “Brazilian operetta” *Triunfo às avessas*, premiered in 1871, with libretto by França Júnior (1838-1890) and music by the Black instrumentalist and conductor Henrique Alves de Mesquita (1830-1906), also concluding with a fado, along with a “chorus of Negros” and *batuque* (Magaldi, 2004, p. 113; Augusto, 2014). During the 1880s, the *fadinho* comes to share the scene with other Afro-Brazilian rhythms, such as the tango in the operetta *A princesa dos cajueiros*, premiered in 1880, with libretto by Artur de Azevedo (1855-1908) and music by the Portuguese violinist and composer Francisco de Sá Noronha (1820-1881), the *lundus* and *cateretês* of *A corte na roça*, “Brazilian operetta of manners” with libretto by Palhares Ribeiro and music by Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847-1935), as well as the *jongo* in the revue *A mulher-homem*, from 1886, with text by Valentim de Magalhães, Filinto d’Almeida and music by the already mentioned H. A. de Mesquita (Magaldi, 2004, p. 114-118, p. 119, p. 121). Finally, I would emphasize the comedy *Como se fazia um deputado*, by França Júnior, premiered in 1882. With music by Carlos Cavalier Darbilly (1846-1918) (Augusto, 2011), the play included *pagode*, *jongo*, drums and *batuque* sung and danced by Blacks (non-actors), in order to celebrate the manumission of one of the characters in the final scene. The comedy was performed to benefit the freedom of an enslaved person, at the peak of the abolitionist campaign (Faria, 2022, p. 292-295).

The presence of Black musicians, hired on a one-time basis to perform in the comedy by França Júnior mentioned above, found an important precedent in the comedy by Martins Penna, addressed below.

2.2 A FAMÍLIA E A FESTA DA ROÇA (1833-1837)

On September 1, 1840, about two months after the majority of Pedro II was proclaimed early,²⁰ there was the premiere of *A família e a festa da roça* (1833-1837), an adaptation of the comedy *L’Amour médecin* by Molière. Musically, the model used by Martins Penna is still the Portuguese *entremes*, with its festive finales using music and dance, but, in contrast to *O juiz de paz da roça*, in which music is only included at the end of the comedy, in *A família e a*

¹⁹ Martinho Corrêa Vasques played, for more than Twenty years, the Leading role in the comedy by Martins Penna, *O noviço*, for which, in the entr’actes the Black actor-singer-dancer would introduce comic arias. For more on Martinho Corrêa Vasques, see Costa-Lima Neto (2018, 2022).

²⁰ The majority of Pedro II was moved forward as an extreme measure in order to deter the wave of revolts sweeping Brazil during the Regencies (1831-1840). See Carvalho (2012, p. 83-129).

feita da roça music appears in all of the Second Tableau, intermingled with the scenes or superimposed on the dialogue of the characters. An anonymous writer in the *Jornal do Commercio* had this to say about the presentation of Penna's comedy, emphasizing its Afro-Black musical finale.

This is followed by the feast of the Holy Spirit, the revelers, the people who come to witness the feast, and the auction, at which, to expiate the sins of the spectators, there is an auction of a sponge cake, a chicken, and a secret cartridge. [...] The final scenes of the feast of the Holy Spirit were very well characterized: the revelers, the barbers, the young men of the city, the entourages, everything is really like that; even in the crowd there was quite a similarity which the appearance of some little black boys would make complete.²¹

The comedy *A família e a festa da roça* contains various mentions of music which Martins Penna uses as a detail in the individual and social characterization of the characters, or, principally, to lend a setting to situations. The author included, for example, a musical band of barbers, and at the finale, a reveler (*folião*) who alternates with the chorus in singing a praise-song for the Divine Holy Spirit, accompanied by two *violas*, drum, and tambourine – before the *lundu* is played by the barbers, along with the festive ringing of bells. The *loa*, presented by the Brazilian artists Estela Sezefreda and Maria Cândida da Conceição²² and by the chorus, includes in its lyrics certain characteristics of what was known as “*língua de preto*” [Black language]²³, such as the muting of the “r” at the ends of words, noted in italics below:

REVELER (*singing*): The dove is flying
To join in our *folia*,
It's flying, and saying;
Long live, long live this merriness.

(*They dance, and all applaud with clapping, bravos and vivas*)

REVELER (*singing*): This people that is here
Comes to see our auction,
Long live celebration
And our devotion!

(*They dance. The bells peal, the barbers play the lundu, and everyone dances and shouts, ant the curtain falls*)²⁴

The barbers were enslaved (or freed) individuals who learned to play an instrument so that this ability would help them to earn their living, increasing their commercial value

²¹ *Jornal do Commercio*, 5/9/1840.

²² Also known as Maria Cândida Brasileira, in order to be differentiated from the Portuguese veteran Maria Cândida de Sousa. See Budasz (2019, p. 287).

²³ The “*língua de preto*” was a kind of Creole, or Portuguese of African origin, which appeared in Portugal at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and was disseminated, from the sixteenth century on, by the *literatura de cordel* (Tinhorão, 2001; Paiva, 2010; Martins, 2022).

²⁴ Pena (2007 [1833-1837], v. I, p. 138).

(Tinhorão, 1998, p. 129).²⁵ Considering that there were, at the beginning of the 1840s, no contracted musicians, nor a fixed orchestra at the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara, one could suppose that the barbers mentioned in the article in the *Jornal do Commercio* belonged to a musical band contracted on occasion by João Caetano. The *folias*, in turn, were temporary groups that sang and dance merrily through the city while the barbers were playing, calling the population to the festival (Abreu, 1999, p. 39). The feast of the Divine Holy Spirit, referred to in Penna's comedy, was the largest and most important of the extensive calendar of feasts in the imperial capital, principally taking place at the Campo de Santana. At the Campo were presented sung masses, opera arias, dances of dolls, comedies, and magical numbers, with musical bands and little instrumental ensembles which performed waltzes, polkas and lundus (Abreu, 1999, p. 77).

A família e a festa da roça was staged prior to the falling out between João Caetano and the Portuguese management of the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara; he came to use other theaters and only returned to the São Pedro in 1851 (Prado, 1972, p. 55). The majority of the comedies by Martins Penna were, thus, performed by the Portuguese dramatic company of the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara, which included, however, some Brazilian artists, such as José Cândido da Silva and Germano Francisco de Oliveira, to whose benefit important musical comedies by Martins Penna were premiered.

2.3 OS DOIS OU O INGLÊS MAQUINISTA (1842, DATA PROVÁVEL)

As was the case for the first two comedies by Martins Penna,²⁶ in *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista* the music appears at the end of the play, with the performance articulated through dialogue between soloists and chorus. The comedy, however, does not take place in the countryside, but in a house in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Martins Penna builds the plot of *Os dois* around a love story: Mariquinha likes Felício, but her hand is also sought by Negreiro, who illegally traffics enslaved Africans, and by Gainer, an Englishman, supposed inventor of miraculous machines, such as one for making sugar with ground human bones. Felício's strategy for overcoming his two competitors consists of playing one against the other. In the struggle for Mariquinha's love, Negreiro flatters Clemência, mother of the young woman, gifting her with a black girl, who had recently come on shore at the Beach in Botafogo. At the end of the comedy, Clemência – who had recently been widowed – asks Gainer to marry her; he has

²⁵ The instruments played by the barbers were generally winds, such as trumpet, horns, cornets, clarinets, and flutes, along with strings – guitars and *rabecas* (violins) – and finally, drums, bass drums, and triangles. See Abreu (1999, p. 56).

²⁶ In addition to *O juiz de paz da roça* and *A família e a festa da roça*, Martins Penna wrote, at the beginning of his dramatic career, the comedy *Um sertanejo na corte* (1833-1837), which was not staged, and the text of which has not survived complete. Penna presents, in the theatrical text of this comedy, mentions of local dances (batuque) and foreign dances (waltz, galop, quadrille and French contradances), as well as musical instruments (*machete*, *viola*, piano). See Costa-Lima Neto (2018, p. 196-206).

already forgotten Mariquinha and thinks only of getting his hands on the fortune left by the deceased Alberto. The latter reappears, as if returning from the grave, and upon discovering that Gainer and Clemência are intending to marry, attacks the Englishman, assisted by Negreiro. After the fight, Alberto accuses Clemência of infidelity, and threatens to leave, but is interrupted by music coming from behind the scene:

Solo (*singing*)
 Ó those in the house, noble folk,
 Awake and you shall hear.
 That from the Orient
 The Three Kings arrived.²⁷

The stage directions request that the *loa de Reis* continues to be performed while the scene is played out. Next, the *rancho* of young men and young women enters the stage, preceded by instrumentalists who accompany the *loa de Reis* sung by two mixed voices (a couple), alternating with the chorus, before a merry instrumental march is played, bringing the comedy to a close. The festive parade of the *Folia de Reis*, with singing and marching, brings the stage closer to the street, creating a transitional zone between the fictional space and time of the stage, and the space of daily life. The French painter Jean Baptiste Debret (1768-1848), who was in Rio de Janeiro from 1816 to 1831, noted that the celebration of the *Reis* would begin during the Christmas season, and would extend until the beginning of January, making this period a sort of *carnaval* for enslaved persons and free persons, who took advantage of the fact that the apparatus of repression was relaxed for Christmas (Reis; Silva, 1989, p. 74). One of the three kings for the *Folia*, who comes from the East to hail the birth of Jesus, is Baltazar, a Black, whose statue is still venerated today in the Church of Our Lady of Lampadosa, standing next to the Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara (presently the Teatro João Caetano). This Church was the home for a Black brotherhood to which belong Paula Brito, mentioned earlier (who also was a Mason²⁸), founded in the middle of the eighteenth century, by Black individuals coming from the Mina coast (Maurício, 1947, p. 109). Penna himself mentioned the brotherhood of Our Lady of Lampadosa in his lyrical feuilletons published in the *Jornal do Commercio* in 1846-1847, noting that the artists from the theater would give benefit performances for the brotherhood, while the latter would offer masses to benefit the theater.²⁹ It is important to note that the *ranchos de Reis*, related to the Christmas season, originated, together with the *pastoris*, the *Carnaval ranchos*, which, together with the *batuques* and the popular music of the period, constituted the basis for the future Samba Schools (Lopes, 2020,

²⁷ For the complete lyrics of the *Folia de Reis* from *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista*, see Martins Pena (2007 [probable date, 1842], v. 1, p. 215).

²⁸ On the relation between Paula Brito and Masonry, see Azevedo (2010).

²⁹ Pena (1965 [1847], p. 230)

p. 116). Moving from ceremony to festival, the couple who came at the front of the *ranchos de Reis*, as in Penna's comedy, would be come, with the passing of time, the pair of *mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeiras* (Cunha, 2001, p. 235). The *loa de Reis* and the march in Martins Penna's comedy, were, thus, perfectly integrated with the subject matter addressed by the play.

Martins Penna refers in the text of the comedy to a slave-ship known as *Veloz Espadarte*. This mention was on purpose, since there was in fact, not only one, but two slave ships known as *Espadarte* and *Veloz*, with the owner of the former being no one other than the Portuguese, José Bernardino de Sá (1802-1855), president of the board of directors of the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara, between 1845 and 1851 (Costa-Lima Neto, 2017).

FELÍCIO – Sr. Negreiro, who owns the brig *Veloz Espadarte*, taken into custody near the Fortaleza de Santa Cruz by the English cruiser for having three hundred Africans on board?

NEGREIRO – To a poor devil who is almost going crazy... But it was well-done, so as not to be foolish. Who would send a ship with such a load across the bar at this time? Only an idiot. There's such a long coastline outside, and such permissive authorities!

FELÍCIO – Permissive because they are forgetting to do their duty!³⁰

José Bernardino de Sá was the largest trafficker in the South Atlantic during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, having captained at least 50 voyages transporting enslaved Africans, on which more than twenty thousand enslaved people were transported, among which around two thousand, five hundred died during the crossings (Pessoa *et al.*, 2021). The trafficker was a multi-millionaire, owner of mansions and newspapers, as well as plantations used for unloading enslaved Africans on the coasts of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, being ennobled as Commander, Baron, and Viscount of Vila Nova do Minho (Costa-Lima Neto, 2017). In the boxes of "his" theater, José Bernardino de Sá honored the ministers of the Emperor, while, in exchange, the trafficker was addressed as "Excelentíssimo" by the high Imperial authorities, such as the chief of police of the Court (Pessoa, 2023, p. 23). Immediately after the Imperial family, including the young Pedro II, had attended the comedy by Martins Penna at the Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara, the deputies resolved to censure it owing to the mentions of the illegal slave trade and the smugglers who carried this out openly, with the connivance of the police and of the Imperial government itself (Costa-Lima Neto, 2018).

The criticism directed at Martins Penna by historians of the Brazilian theater – that his comedies did not have Black characters, and that the author did not make an ideological critique of slavery, but simply portrayed it – did not consider that the struggle against the illegal slave trade, which the author was engaged in, was a form of anti-slavery combat which took place *before* abolitionist ideals arrived in Brazil, and reached broader sectors of society,

³⁰ Pena (2007 [1842], v. I, p. 146).

beginning in the middle of the 1860s (Mattos, 2000). In addition to this, such criticisms ignored the fact that the syntax of Penna's comedies is also musical, and that the songs and dances contributed to the creation of a positive mark of Afro-Brazilian cultural identity in the midst of a very slavocratic regime, fighting for space with the all-powerful Italian opera.³¹

2.4 O DILETANTE (1845)

One year after the Rio de Janeiro premiere of the opera *Norma* (libretto by Felice Romani and music by Vincenzo Bellini), Martins Penna produced a parody of it with his comedy *O diletante*, which was premiered at the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara in January 1845, to benefit the Brazilian dramatic actor Germano Francisco de Oliveira. In contrast to the earlier comedies by Martins Penna, in *O diletante* the musical numbers and references are present from the beginning to the end of the plot, related principally to the characters. Sometime, the author mentions titles or arias from the opera, without requesting that the characters actually sing them, which was not even necessary in the context of the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara, whose spectators were qualified listeners, cultural able to apprehend the intertextual play and the parody created by the author (Hutcheon, 1985). At other moments, the characters are asked to sing and to play instruments, as I will describe below.

The scenario for the comedy foreshadows the opposition between colony and metropolis (countryside-court, farm-city, center-periphery, Brazil-foreign) (Rabetti, 2007), through the strategic arrangement in space of two musical instruments:

(Salon in the house of José Antônio. At the back, an exit door; to the right and left, doors leading inside. Luxurious mahogany furniture. On the right, a piano, on which there are various pieces of music, and to the left, a sofa, on which there is a guitar.)³²

The owner of the piano – an instrument symbolizing the Europeanized elites of the nineteenth-century Court – is José Antônio, a dilettante³³ with a passion for the opera *Norma*, while the guitar is associated with the character of Marcelo, an agriculturalist from São Paulo. Note, in the following dialogue, the reference to the danced *fadinho*, also included in the musical finale of *O juiz de paz da roça*:

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – [...] Friend Marcelo is a rich man, honest and good, even if rustic. Poor thing, he never has left São Paulo! This is the first time that he is coming to the Court; he is stunned. There is just one thing about him that astonishes me: he doesn't like music. I took him to the theater yesterday to hear *Norma* and he was

³¹ Italian opera was at the top of the artistic hierarchy of the period, above spoken theater and musical theater, the latter of which took last place in terms of theatrical prestige.

³² Pena (2007 [1844], v. I, p. 349).

³³ The dilettante was defined by the writer José de Alencar as “a person who sees the singer, but does not hear the music that she sings; who shouts *bravo* precisely when the prima-donna sings out of tune, and applauds when all her trying to hear a beautiful note” (Alencar, *apud* Magalhães Jr., 1972, p. 81).

sound asleep during the whole performance. Asleep, while they are singing *Norma*! That is something that only a paulista from the sticks would do! [...] Friend, be sure to enjoy the pleasures of the Court. Don't bury yourself in the life of the backcountry. Go to the theater to hear *Norma*, *Belisário*, *Ana Bolena*, *Furioso*.

MARCELO – I don't like it at all. A few songs that I don't understand, and which you cannot dance to. There is nothing at all like a fado.

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – How awful! Preferring a fado to Italian music! (*aside*) Such ignorance!

MARCELO – It is just that you have not yet heard a fado that is really rhythmic and expressive. (*he picks up the guitar, and tunes it, while José Antônio is speaking*)

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – I don't want to hear it! Don't say this to anyone, or you will discredit yourself. Italian music, my friend, is the best present that God has given us, it is food for sensitive souls.

MARCELO – Well, my food is beans with bacon, cornmeal, and pork loin.³⁴

The dilettante José Antônio wants to marry Marcelo off to his daughter, Josefina, who, however, was in love with Dr. Gaudêncio, a doctor respected and welcomed by society, but who ends up being unmasked by Marcelo, who reveals him to be an unscrupulous profiteer. Always playing a theatrical game of contrasts through musical mentions and sounds, Martins Penna includes in his comedy references to fados and “licentious” urban popular songs, such as “Maria Caxuxa”; the comic inversion of the slow and sad Italian aria *Casta Diva*, the warhorse from the opera *Norma*:

JOSEFINA – You called for me, Father?

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – Come here, you crazy little Thing. What have you done with *Casta Diva*?

JOSEFINA – It is on the piano.

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – Go find it.

JOSEFINA – Do you want to sing it?

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – Enjoy it with me.

JOSEFINA – If it is for me to sing, I am not going to look for it. I can't stand it anymore. It is boring!

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – What are you saying, barbaric? *Casta Diva*, boring? This sublime production of the most sublime genius?

JOSEFINA – It would be most sublime, but since for some time I have been hearing it every day, sung, squealed, meowed, whistled, and strummed in every street and every house, I can't bear it any longer. Everyone sings *Casta Diva* – it is an epidemic!

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – And what's more, you are right! One hears it here: (*sings Casta Diva with a hoarse voice*) One hears it there: (*sings with a very thin voice*) And farther along there's a little boy: (*whistles it*) They murder it! Assassinate it! But you sing well.

JOSEFINA – Thank you, but I will not sing it anymore!

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – All right, but you have to sing the duet: *Mira, o Norma, a tuoi ginocchi...* (*singing*)

³⁴ Pena (2007 [1844], v. I, p. 353).

JOSEFINA (*laughing*) – And with whom? Are you going to sing the part of *Norma*?

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – With your mother.

JOSEFINA – Mama singing!... Mama only sings *Maria Cachucha* when she is sewing, and when she does it is really out of tune! Come now, papa!³⁵

The cachucha was a Spanish dance from the end of the eighteenth century, imported at the beginning of the nineteenth century to Portugal, where the lyrics of the song began to refer to a popular, farcical, and licentious character, Maria Cachucha (or Capucha), who sleeps accompanied by a black and bad-tempered cat that scratches her behind, or by a certain friar Bento (Teixeira, 1981). In Brazil, the cachucha was danced on stages in Rio from the 1820s on, by dancers such as Estela Sezefreda, mentioned above, and its melody was played by barrel-organs in the streets and house of the city (Ulhoa, 2020, 2021), having been used, as well, in the famous lundu “Lá no Largo da Sé” (lyrics by Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre and music by Cândido Inácio da Silva, 1837) (Ulhoa; Costa-Lima Neto, 2014).

The artists at the period of Martins Penna were versatile, performing as actors-singers-dancers, some even playing musical instruments on stage. This was the case for José Cândido da Silva, who appeared singing comic arias, *lundus*, *modinhas*, *tiranas* and *tonadilhas*, as well as arias and duets from Italian opera buffa.³⁶ The Brazilian artist probably performed the role of José Antônio in *O dilettante*, while the actor who was the recipient of the benefits from the production, Germano Francisco de Oliveira, in turn, must have played the role of Marcelo. The actor entrusted with the role of the dilettante sang, in a parodistic way, bits of arias from *Norma*, as well as, at times, playing on the piano the introductions of the arias, duets, and trios, while the actor in the role of Marcelo, in turn, would sing *a capella*, accompanying himself on the guitar, or being accompanied from behind the curtains.³⁷

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – Attention! (plays the Introduction to the duet from *Norma* on the piano; as soon as the singing should begin José Antônio says: Now! Merenciana sings [out of tune] as at the beginning. As he says these words, Marcelo, who has secretly picked up the guitar, begins to sing out loud, accompanying himself with the guitar)

MARCELO – I am a sad cowboy.
I have no time to love:
By day I pasture my cattle,
At night I am on patrol.

³⁵ Pena (2007 [1845], v. I, p. 350-351).

³⁶ Regarding José Cândido da Silva, see *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*: 2/8/1833; 13/7/1836; 18/6/1838; 26/10/1839; 22/4/1840; 14/10/1840; 16/12/1840; 1/10/1841; 8/11/1843; 25/11/1845; 27/8/1846.

³⁷ In Brasil and in Portugal, the use of music behind the scènes made it possible for specialized musicians, who were not seen by the public, to be used in the performance of difficult pieces that demanded refined technique on the part of the performers. Thus, the dramaturge could have more freedom and daring in the musical part, while the director could have a better quality of performance for the show (Gonçalves, 2012, p. 226). Martins Penna asked for dances and a modinha to be performed behind the scenes in the comedy *O namorador e a noite de São João* (1844), also premiered to benefit the actor Germano Francisco de Oliveira, on March 13, 1845, at the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara (*Revista Dyonisos*, 1966).

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO – (standing up) Be quiet with three hundred million devils, you anteater! (goes to Marcelo, who continues to sing)

MERENCIANA – And I pulled it off! Well-done (leaves running, and Josefina follows him)³⁸

In order to get closer to José Antônio, Dr. Gaudêncio pretends to enjoy opera, and to have a tenor voice, but Marcelo discovers that Gaudêncio in reality had a lover and two children and that he wants to marry Josefina only out of financial reasons. In a melodramatic plot twist, the theatrical plot reveals that the lover was in fact Marcelo's sister, seduced and abandoned by Gaudêncio, years earlier, in São Paulo. Enraged, the agriculturalist threatens Gaudêncio with a shotgun, demanding that the latter marry his sister, but the unscrupulous villain only agrees to marry when José Antônio, fearing Marcelo, offers him a dowry. Josefina and Marcelo, wisely, decide not to marry. This is the cure for José Antônio to rave one last time: "Now, my friends, since everything has been arranged to general satisfaction, and we are reunited here, couldn't we sing the finale of *Norma*?"³⁹ The final scene parodies the plot of the opera, in which the protagonist dies. Upon learning by letter that the theater where *Norma* was presented will be closed, and that the Italian opera company has been sent back to Europe, José Antônio "is tremulous for a few moments, raise his arms, gives a pungent moan, and falls down dead".⁴⁰

Although Martins Penna criticizes both the dazzled citizens of the court, and the character of the agriculturalist, in *O diletante* and in the other comedies the author tends to emphasize the countryside as a reserve of moral values that the city was losing as the nineteenth century continued (Rabetti, 2007, p. 66). Thus, in the play of theatrical and musical contrasts on stage, the character of the agriculturalist Marcelo, with his guitar, and his rural danced *fadinhos*,⁴¹ ends up getting the upper hand over the dilettante a José Antônio, literally dying of love for the Italian opera *Norma*.

2.5 QUEM CASA, QUER CASA (1845)

The Italian operas presented at the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara competed for the affection of the public with the French comic operas of the Teatro de São Francisco, directed by João Caetano.⁴² At the same time, published by the print shop of Paula Brito, the comedies

³⁸ Pena (2007 [1845], v. I, p. 375-376).

³⁹ Pena (2007 [1845], v. I, p. 409).

⁴⁰ Pena (2007 [1845], v. I, p. 410).

⁴¹ For a rare example of *fadinho*, see "Pica-pau atrevido", a Fado Mineiro from the comic opera *O Casamento e a mortalha no céu se talha* (music by Joaquim José Goyanno and lyrics by Francisco Correia da Conceição), the score of which was originally published in the periodical *Marmota na Corte*, issued by Paula Brito, in 1851 (Pacheco, 2022, p. 331-334).

⁴² In July 1840, a French dramatic company arrived in Rio de Janeiro, and took up residence at the Teatro de São Januário, where it began to present its repertoire in the two principal genres of French musical theater: the vaudeville and the comic opera. In September 1846, it was the moment for a French operatic Company, specializing

of Martins Penna competed for the preferences of the readers, along with the translated librettos of Italian opera, surpassing the albums of romances and collections of poetry, making him the “*best-seller* of Brazilian dramatic literature at that moment” (Godói, 2010, p. 233).

Just as Martins Penna’s comedies assimilated musical influences from Portuguese entremez and Italian opera, the author was also attentive to French comic operas. Unlike Italian operas, in which the entirety of the text was set to music, in French comic operas the dialogues were spoken, interspersed with chansonettes.⁴³ As an example of French musical influence in the musical comedies of Penna we can take the proverb in one act, *Quem casa, quer casa* (1845), premiered at the Teatro de São Pedro, December 5, 1845, as a benefit for José Cândido da Silva.⁴⁴

In this comedy-proverb, Eduardo is a very vain amateur violinist who lives for free in the house of Fabiana and Nicolau, parents of Olaia, his wife, where he passes his days trying to play, without success, a piece of music called *Le Trémolo*, with which he makes everyone’s life hell.

OLAIA – He just got out of bed today, put on his pants, and picked up his violin – he did not even brush his hair. He put a piece of music on the stand, which he calls his *Trémolo* by Bériot, and now you will see – *zás, zás!* (*moving her arms*). With his eyes bulging out over the music, his hair standing on end, sweat running down his forehead, and his arm flying back and forth enough to make you dizzy!⁴⁵

The music which Eduardo tries desperately to play throughout the comedy is the “Capriccio for violin and piano, Op. 30, *Le Trémolo*, on a theme of Beethoven”, by the Belgian composer Charles Auguste de Bériot (1802-1870), performed at the Teatro de São Pedro de Alcântara only three months prior to the premiere of the comedy *Quem casa, quer casa*. *Le Trémolo* was performed at the Teatro de São Pedro by the violinist Agostino Robbio, who traveled the world claiming to have been the student of Niccolò Paganini, although he never was such.⁴⁶ Martins Penna probably attended Robbio’s performance, poking fun at it through the character of Eduardo.

EDUARDO – You will see, I am going to be famous! I will travel through all of Europe, Africa and Asia; I will play for all the sovereigns and bigwigs of today, and when I return my chest will be covered with Grand Crosses, commendations, medals,

in comic operas, to arrive in the imperial capital. Contracted by João Caetano, this company made its debut at the Sala São Januário, but beginning in December 1846, moved into the Teatro de São Francisco (Inacio, 2013, p. 62).

⁴³ The expression “comic opera” goes back to the open-air theaters which were operating in France around 1715. It described shows with instrumental and vocal music, spoken dialogue, and eventually, recitatives. It was in contrast with the Italian opera seria, which was tragic in nature (Guinsburg *et al.*, 2009, p. 247).

⁴⁴ In his seminal work, Arêas (1987) was a pioneer in identifying similarities between the songs in dance rhythms from *Quem casa, quer casa* and the French comic opera.

⁴⁵ Pena (2007 [1845], v. II, p. 67).

⁴⁶ In addition to Brasil, Agostino Robbio appeared in the following countries: Azores (1843); Argentina (1849); Portugal (1850-1851); Algeria (1853); Cuba (1854), USA (1855); Australia and Japan (1863). See Cymbron (2012, p. 310-311).

etc. etc. There, they know how to reward true merit... Here they think that money does everything. Money! Who cares about money?⁴⁷

The stutterer, Sabino, Olaia's brother, speaks by singing in the rhythms of *muquirão*, *miudinho* and *polka*, while Fabiana fights with Paulina, wife of Sabino and sister of Eduardo, who also lives in the same house.

SABINO (*singing in the style of muquirão*) – If I stutter... If I stutter... it was God whom made me this way... it is not my fault... making me so uncomfortable...

FABIANA – Who's making you uncomfortable? I'm talking about your wife, who brings this house into disarray...

SABINO – (*in the same style*) Everyone, everyone in this house... is to blame, to blame for this... My mother just wants to give order... and Paulina has a temper... If Paulina, if Paulina... were, were nicer... there wouldn't be so many fights... they would live more quietly...

FABIANA – But she is shameless, who comes deliberately to interfere in my running the house.

SABINO – (*in the same style*) That she is shame... shameless... I know very well, very well... and here I feel, and here I feel... that my... my mother... should pay more atten... more attention to me...⁴⁸

To Fabiana's anger and indifferent to the domestic chaos, Nicolau goes through the processions of the imperial capital every day, accompanied by his younger children dressed as little angels. The comedy builds to a crescendo, with fights breaking out all over the place, culminating in a pummeling climax. This is when the character of Anselmo appears on the scene, Paulina and Eduardo's father, who has been informed of the domestic problems caused by his children and has decided to rent two houses to live in with his spouses, because "Whoever marries, wants a house".

The same theatrical and musical opposition seen in the previous comedy, between the characters of the Italian opera-loving dilettante and the fado-singing agriculturalist, occurs in *Quem casa, quer casa*, with regard to the characters of the violinist Eduardo and the stuttering Sabino, who can only speak properly if he sings in a *muquirão*, *miudinho* and *polka* rhythm. *Muquirão* is referred to in the periodicals of the time as a synonym for a festive gathering and sung dance, accompanied by the viola and analogous to *lundu* and *fado*.⁴⁹ The term *miudinho*,

⁴⁷ Pena (2007 [1845], v. II, p. 96).

⁴⁸ Pena (2007 [1845], v. II, p. 83).

⁴⁹ I cite a delightful chronicle on the *muquirão*, published in the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, on 14/10/1871: "Let's go to the *muquirão*. [...] The priest slipped in, Scholastica clapped her hands, one of the relatives of the house, a *getiranaboia* with the pointy-nosed face of a chocolate maker that would frighten you, but an excellent dancer of fado, strummed his guitar, gave the signal, and raising his voice, sang: 'This is what I'm telling you / I want to say that / Someone who never swam in the river / Can drown in the sea.' They take their places; Dona Scholastica of my heart, dance in front of me, says the impudent priest, and begins the *muquirão*. The crowd was already so big that one couldn't lick one's self, and the guitarist, Quincas do Brejo, began to punish the song with mangled verses; confusion began to reign, and my friend the priest, seemed, I don't say it, to give a pinch to Scholastica, who gave a great shout, asking the priest for forgiveness for the offense, with the indispensable ceremony of saying that he had stepped on her accidentally. The *muquirão* lasted two hours, until, everyone having danced, they fell down exhausted, and rest was indispensable."

on the other hand, referred to a dance described as “lascivious” by the observers of the period. The term was used, as well, as an adjective for related dances, such as a certain “fado so delightful, so charming, so *miudinho*, [that] it glosses over a few blocks at the request of a certain madame”.⁵⁰ The polka, finally, was originally a dance from Bohemia, which arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1844, where it was a great success, becoming the subject of arrangements for piano and being included in farces and dances in theaters and salons. Like the Spanish *tirana* and *cachucha*, the polka was Brazilianized, that is, adapted locally, and, beginning with the 1870s, came to be a necessary part of the repertory of ensembles in Rio playing Choro.⁵¹

The three dances associated with the character of Sabino exemplify Martins Penna put together musical and theatrical partnerships with the artists who performed his comedies. Actors-singers-dancers, such as José Cândido da Silva, appropriated the text of *Quem casa, quer casa*, using it as the basis for creating song lyrics in dance rhythms, as if the theatrical text were a sort of libretto for Afro-Brazilian comic opera. A similar procedure is used in the next comedy, but in a melodramatic and tragicomic register.

2.6 OS CIÚMES DE UM PEDESTRE OU O TERRÍVEL CAPITÃO DO MATO (1845-1846)

When God gave me the color of Othello, it was so that I would be jealous of my race!
(José do Patrocínio, *apud* Alonso, 2015, p. 129)

In December 1845, the text of Martins Penna’s comedy entitled *Os ciúmes de um pedestre ou o terrível capitão do mato*, a parody of the tragedy *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, by William Shakespeare (1564-1616), was censored by the Conservatório Dramático. One of the censors of the institution founded in 1843, of which Martins Penna was secretary, took issue with the fact that the play supposedly ridiculed João Caetano, who played the character of General Otelo on the stages of Rio de Janeiro with his skin painted black (Rhinow, 2007). The tragedy was even performed a few times in shows for the freedom of enslaved people.⁵²

Another censor criticized the comedy for alluding to two true events. A Portuguese citizen was found on the roof of a house, intending to kidnap a young woman with whom he was in love – the girl was the daughter of one of the members of the Conservatório Dramático. In another case, a slave owner punished an enslaved person until the latter died death and, to hide the crime, put the corpse in a sack, ordering another of “his” blacks to throw it into the sea. A patrolman, however, approached him and, discovering what he was carrying, arrested him, and summoned his owner (Magalhães Jr., 1972, p. 162).

⁵⁰ *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 5/12/1833.

⁵¹ On the polka as a symbol of “Brazilianity” in the Choro, see Aragão (2013).

⁵² See *Jornal do Commercio*, 15/10/1847, 13/12/1847; *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 29/10/1850.

The comedy was going to be presented in January 1846, but due to the censorship by the Conservatório Dramático, only premiered six months later, on July 9, 1846, as a benefit event for the actor Luiz Antônio Monteiro. There were only two performances, and, unlike the other comedies by Martins Penna, it was not even announced in the newspapers. Finding himself increasingly isolated from the Teatro de São Pedro, two months after the premiere Martins Penna started working as a music critic for the *Jornal do Commercio*, writing a total of 52 feuilletons on opera, between September 8, 1846, and October 6, 1847 (Pena, 1965).

The principal character in this comedy is André João (or André Camarão), a pedestrian policeman, that is, one who worked on foot, in contrast to a mounted policeman. The pedestrian officer imprisons his wife and stepdaughter inside his own house, fearing that he will be betrayed and abandoned by both, but Paulino, his neighbor, breaks into his house, through the roof, in order to woo the policeman's wife.

Scene I

As the curtain rises, the scene is dark and empty. One hears midnight being rung on a distant bell. As soon as the last bell tolls, PAULINO appears on the stairs and starts descending cautiously.

PAULINO (*still at the top of the stairs*) – Midnight. It is time to descend (*begins to descend*) He went out... At this hour he is looking for runaway blacks... What silence! Is my darling still awake? How much I risk for her! I slipped on the roof and almost fell into the street. It was arranged! But, after all, the roof is the highway for cats and polka lovers... But careful with the result! (*at this point he is at the last steps on the staircase*) I hear a noise...⁵³

The sound of bells provided important information on space and time for the theater-going audience. The regulation establishing the “Toque do Aragão” was in force in Rio de Janeiro. At ten o'clock at night, in the summer, and at nine o'clock in the winter, the large bell of the church of São Francisco and that of the Mosteiro de São Bento would toll without interruption for a half-hour, as a sign for the population to return to their houses. The regulation was in force from 1825 until 1878, intending to crack down on the actions of thieves, burglars, and the gatherings of enslaved persons for capoeira and batuques. Thus, the twelve bells heard in Penna's comedy let the audience know that the scene was taking place in a forbidden space and time, whose social borders and moral prohibitions would only dangerously be crossed by the characters.

Those assigned to the heavy and lethally dangerous work of bell-ringing were enslaved blacks, who used the bells as percussive musical instruments, with a dual religious and esthetic function.⁵⁴ The bell rings would alternate between *dobres* and *repiques*, the former played with the bell in motion, the latter with the bell stationary. Various comedies by Martins Penna call for

⁵³ Pena (2007 [1845-1846], v. III, p. 115-116).

⁵⁴ Bells were part of the African cultural-musical-religious complex, as exemplified by agogôs, gãs and adjás, instruments with one or two metal bells, used for musical and/or ceremonial purposes, for example in the worship of the Orixás. See Galante (2023).

the inclusion of bell ringing, which could even become the principal part of the theatrical soundtrack. This is particularly the case with *Os irmãos das almas* (1844), premiering as a benefit for José Cândido da Silva, on September 9, 1844 (*Revista Dyonisos*, 1966). In this comedy, the funeral tolling for All Soul's Day mark the rhythm and tempo of characters struggling for survival (Arêas, 1987), in the roles of Freemasons and members of the religious brotherhoods of enslaved persons and poor free men.⁵⁵ It is probable that some of the characters of this comedy, such as the brother of souls⁵⁶, Sousa, were Blacks, in spite of not being indicated as such in the list of characters. As Mattos (2020, p. 42) notes, until the first half of the nineteenth century, free-born individuals were listed as white or brown in the documentation of the period, while the terms “crioulo” and “black” were used, respectively for enslaved persons born in Brazil or in Africa, and the rarer term “negro” for free men or freed men. Martins Penna, in turn, used the term “negro” exclusively for enslaved characters or extras.⁵⁷ This means that the occasional absence of the term “negro” in the lists of characters of the author's comedies does not necessarily signify the absence of black characters, but rather of enslaved blacks. To summarize, a black character, whose civil status was free, was not identified in the author's lists.

The mentions of the hopping polka as the soundtrack for lovers and the roof as the highway for cats, in *Os ciúmes de um pedestre*, make fun of the character of the police officer, who arrives from work bringing along, arrested, Alexandre, Balbina's lover, who invented a risky plan for seeing his beloved: he painted himself black, pretending to sleep by the door to the policeman's house. The police officer, deceived, arrested the false runaway slave, brought him into his house, so as to gain a few days and increase the amount of the reward offered for his capture. At the climax, after discovering that Alexandre and Balbina are lovers, and that Paulino was courting Anacleto, the policeman, driven mad by jealousy, tries to kill the two lovers, and plans to conceal the bodies by putting them in sacks. Alexandre manages, however, to communicate with the police, and reveals the criminal plans of the policeman, who ends up being arrested.

The text of *Os ciúmes de um pedestre* could be read as a sort of vocal score for the nineteenth-century comic actor, especially if we consider that João Caetano, when performing Othello on stage, would make use of the deep tone of his voice to give the character the “rough character of a son of the desert” and “to give the spectator the notion of the roar of an African

⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that more than 50 years after its premiere, the comedy *Os irmãos das almas* was performed at the end of a benefit show at the Teatro Recreio Dramático, which featured a speech by the Black abolitionist leader, José do Patrocínio. See *Gazeta da Tarde*, 18/04/1896.

⁵⁶ Translator's note: the brother of souls was a lay member of the brotherhood entrusted with responsibilities relating to funerals and burials of the members.

⁵⁷ Examples of this are the lists of characters in the comedies *O juiz de paz da roça*, *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista*, *O namorador ou a noite de São João* e *O Cigano*, in which appear, respectively the terms: “negros”, “negreiro, negociante de negros novos”, “negros e moleques”, “dois negros”. See Pena (2007), volume I, p. 4, p. 140; volume II, p. 4, p. 206.

lion” (Santos, 1862, p. 26.). It is not hard to imagine, thus, that in performing the character of the policeman André Camarão, the actor would comically imitate “the savage and uninhibited cries or roars” (Macedo, *apud* Prado, 1972, p. 28) of the great dramatic actor, in the role of Othello. One can note in the following monologue the mentions of the lion and other animals, who become part of the same imaginary bestiary:

POLICEMAN – Let’s see who is capable of deceiving me – deceiving André Camarão! Here’s the girl, I will bring the paddle. An excellent panacea for love affairs! And my wife... Oh, if the idea of deceiving, of letting herself be seduced were even to come close to her thoughts... Ah, don’t mention it, don’t even think about it! I would be a tiger, a lion, an elephant! I would kill her, bury her, skin her alive. Oh, I am already trembling with rage! I saw *Othello* many times in the theater, when I used to go into the audience on orders. Othello’s crime is a crumb, a pittance, a Nothing in comparison to mine... Deceive me! Her, deceive me! Ah, I do not even know what I would be capable of! Her and her lover, bound, I would send them as a gift to the devil, they would end up on the tip of this sword, on the nails of these hands, under the heels of these boots! I do not want even to say what I would be capable of.⁵⁸

As Magalhães Jr. noted (1972, p. 158), the following dialogue can be compared to a comic duet between the tragic Gravity and seriousness of the voice of the policeman, in counterpoint with the high, hesitant and intimidated voice of his wife, both reading the letter left under the door by Paulino:

POLICEMAN – (presenting the letter to her by candlelight) Read it!
 ANACLETA – André, have mercy! (terrified)
 POLICEMAN – Read with me! (reading) “My beautiful Anacleta...”
 ANACLETA – (repeating) “My beautiful Anacleta...”
 POLICEMAN – (reading)... Your husband is an animal...
 ANACLETA – (repeating) ... Your husband is an animal...
 POLICEMAN – (the same) ... and you are an angel...
 ANACLETA – (the same)... and you are an angel...
 POLICEMAN – (the same) Tonight I will come to see you...
 ANACLETA – (the same) Tonight I will come to see you...
 POLICEMAN – (the same)... and if I am not lucky enough to meet you...
 ANACLETA – (the same)... and if I am not lucky enough to meet you...
 POLICEMAN – (the same)... I will leave you this letter...
 ANACLETA – (the same)... I will leave you this letter...
 POLICEMAN – (the same)... for you to know how much I love you...
 ANACLETA – (the same)... for you to know how much I love you...
 POLICEMAN – (the same)... and how much I despise your stupid husband...
 ANACLETA – (the same)... and how much I despise your stupid husband.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Pena (2007 [1845], v. III, p. 134). Our emphasis.

⁵⁹ Pena (2007 [1845], v. III, p. 143-145).

Note that the policeman is here insulted as stupid (“burro”, or donkey, in the original text), just as, in the dialogue cited earlier from the comedy *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista*, the slave trafficker is called a “ass”. In counterpoint, in both examples, you can hear the voice of Martins Penna himself, criticizing the authoritarian patriarchal system, ridiculing the repressive police apparatus and denouncing the traffickers who illegally smuggled the enslaved.

3 Final considerations

The musical comedies discussed in this article reveal a constant use of dances and songs that are Afro-Brazilian (fado, lundu, batuque, muquirão, miudinho) or of European original, adapted locally (tirana, caxuxa, march, polka, waltz). In the two initial comedies, *O juiz de paz da roça* and *A família e a festa da roça*, Afro-Brazilian musical culture appears related to a theatrical “roça”, relatively distant and exotic; tirana, fado, batuque and lundu are associated with the characters of poor free men and enslaved men. In the following comedy, *Os dois ou o inglês maquinista*, the action takes place in a house in Rio de Janeiro, where a Folia de Reis procession enters, followed by a marcha-rancho – foreshadowing today’s carnival parade. In the comedies *O dileitante* and *Quem casa, quer casa*, also set in houses in the capital, the musical mentions and musico-choreographic numbers include Afro-Brazilian songs and dances (fado, batuque, curitiba, muquirão, miudinho), Iberian ones (cachucha) and items from other sources (polka), in opposition to Italian opera and European concert music. The comedy *Os ciúmes de um pedestre ou o terrível capitão do mato*, finally, is set in the house of a policeman assigned to chasing down enslaved persons, like a prison. The hopping polka is mentioned in the theatrical text, along with the sounds of bells and of animals, like cats, satirizing the institution of the police, and ridiculing the character of the *pedestre* or *capitão-do-mato* [hunter of runaway slaves].

The examples mentioned reveal that, initially, the Afro-Brazilian musical culture was included by Martins Penna in a rural scenic space (the “roça”), while European music appeared related to the imperial capital and its main theater. Gradually, as the musical playwright moved the theatrical action from the countryside to the city, the musical boundaries became more flexible. Songs and dances with an Afro-Brazilian influence invaded the urban scenic space and the homes of the middle and upper classes of the population, where they began to compete for public taste with Italian and French operas and European concert music. The musical dramaturgy corresponded roughly to what was happening in the incipient market of the imperial capital, with the texts of Penna’s comedies set to music competing with the librettos translated from Italian opera for the readers’ preference.

It is not by chance that Penna’s comedies were used as a musical soundtrack striking out against the illegal slave trade, and even used to attract the public to events raising funds to purchase manumission for the enslaved (Figure 1). Through musical theater, “benefits to

free the enslaved”, through the press and printing shops, Martins Penna, Paula Brito, João Caetano, Estela Sezefreda, Martinho Corrêa Vasques and other artists and learned men (*homens de letras*) promoted black culture, confronting, on the artistic plane, the illegal trafficking and the powerful Portuguese smugglers who dominated the principal theater of the imperial capital in the 1840s, before the slave trade was definitively prohibited in 1850.

The dances and songs with Afro-Brazilian influences in Martins Penna’s comedies were used by the author not only to set the scene, reinforce contrasts between the characters, dialogue with the actors’ repertoire and with the audience’s horizon of expectations, but also as a positive mark of cultural identity. For this reason, the Afro-Brazilian musical finales of his comedies reverberated in the second half of the 19th century, influencing important musical theater genres of the time, such as comedies, operettas and revues (*revistas*), with their lundus, cateretês, batuques, jongsos, tangos and maxixes. A similar process took place with the “benefits for freedom” promoted from the 1830s onwards by Paula Brito, publisher of Penna’s comedies, which were transformed in the 1870s and 1880s into abolitionist concert-lectures demanding the end of slavery in the country. Theater, music and the press were allies in this long anti-slavery struggle.

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