



These reservations aside, one hopes that this astutely prepared edition will stimulate performances and recordings of this forgotten but often quite beautiful repertory. Choral directors should seriously consider adding the Wagenseil and Hofmann examples to their ensembles' unaccompanied repertoires. And musicologists should be delighted to have these contemporary a cappella masses to compare with the Kyrie of Joseph Haydn's *Missa sunt bona mixta malis* (HII: 2) that resurfaced twenty-three years ago.

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## RECORDING

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JOÃO DOMINGOS BOMTEMPO (1771–1842)

*SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN E FLAT MAJOR, OP. 11; SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D MAJOR*

Algarve Orchestra / Álvaro Cassuto

Naxos 8.557163, 2004

It is enough to have listened to his First Symphony to place him already within the rank of the most celebrated composers; one need only hear him perform his own music at the piano to consider, without doubt, that none except he is capable of expressing truly the novel and interesting effects of which he is author and consummate master. Those who yet fail to imitate him will perhaps accuse him of not having attended to those hints to which the crowds are accustomed: but they must remember that the music of Haydn, Gluck and Mozart was criticized until it had been sufficiently studied that its true value could be appreciated. One must hope that Monsieur Bomtempo perseveres and keeps himself on the route of the great men, whose reputations were not built by retreating, and whose talents were ultimately rewarded.

This passage was published in the Parisian press in January 1810, and has been reproduced in at least two modern studies: Jean-Paul Sarraut's *Catalogue des œuvres de João Domingos Bomtempo* (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1970), 22, and Joseph Scherpereel's *João Domingos Bomtempo, musicien portugais, XIXe siècle: témoignages inédits de sa célébrité pendant son premier séjour, 1801-1810* (Paris: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 1993), 270–271. The article from which it is quoted is one of numerous pieces of evidence attesting to the involvement of the Portuguese composer João Domingos Bomtempo (born Lisbon, 28 December 1775; died Lisbon, 18 August 1842) in French musical culture during the early nineteenth century. Bomtempo arrived in Paris in 1801, and stayed until 1810. Welcomed by the Portuguese 'liberais', he presented several of his compositions in public, including piano sonatas and piano concertos; the success of these public concerts also led to the publication of some of his works by Leduc. In 1810 Bomtempo installed himself in London, and for a year continued to compose and perform his music there, where he also taught music to a daughter of the Duchess of Hamilton. More of his music was published at this time by the firm of Muzio Clementi, whom he had met in Paris. Bomtempo returned to Lisbon in 1811, but went back to London five years later. In 1820, after another brief sojourn in Paris, he finally settled in Portugal.

Bomtempo's two surviving symphonies date from different stages of his career, and in both cases the only clues to their actual dates of composition are indirect. For years, it was thought that the first had been written c1810, in the last months of his initial stay in Paris. This was inferred from the appreciative reviews of one of its performances, as documented by Sarraut in 1970, but generally accepted as having been earlier than this. The original source was an article about Bomtempo that Ernesto Vieira included in his *Diccionario biographico de musicos portugueses* (Lisbon: Typographia Mattos Moreira & Pinheiro/Lambertini, 1900),



which also alleged that Bomtempo wrote four more symphonies. Vieira's source, in turn, was an article published in *O Investigador Português*, a newspaper financed by the Portuguese court in Brazil and published in London between 1811 and 1821. The work was later played in London in 1811 and published by Clementi as Bomtempo's Op. 11, in a reduction for piano (four hands). In 1993, however, Joseph Scherpereel published an earlier reference to the performance of a symphony composed by Bomtempo, dated May 1805. It seems plausible that this work was his first symphony in E flat major, meaning that the date of composition should be brought forwards by about five years.

It is generally accepted that Bomtempo's second symphony was written c1822. By this time the composer had settled in Lisbon, where he founded a concert society in imitation of those he had encountered in Paris and London: his *Sociedade Filarmónica* ('Philharmonic Society', borrowing the name from the London organization founded almost a decade before) lasted from 1822 to 1828. In addition to Bomtempo's music, the *Sociedade* presented symphonies by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven (the Fifth), as shown by the Portuguese chronicles published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (Manuel Carlos de Brito and David Cranmer, *Crónicas da vida musical portuguesa na primeira metade do século XIX* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1990), 56–57, 61–62). Bomtempo's second symphony is usually dated in the 1820s because of its dedication to the *Sociedade*, but could, of course, have been written some years earlier. (The first modern edition of Bomtempo's first symphony was published in 1963 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the second modern edition in 1994, by Musicoteca. The works were edited by Filipe de Sousa and Christopher Bochmann respectively.)

The date of composition of Bomtempo's first symphony and its impact in French musical periodicals are two issues that offer a peripheral, though by no means uninteresting, insight into the history of the genre. The work is evidently influenced heavily by Haydn and Mozart, as indeed were all of Bomtempo's contemporaries. Examination of the state of the symphony in Paris in 1805, however, reveals a peculiar panorama that could help to explain the interest in the Portuguese composer: this year coincided with the definitive silence, in terms of symphonic composition, of Ignaz Pleyel. At the same time, both François-Joseph Gossec and Nicolas-Étienne Méhul were silent; neither returned to the symphony until 1809. Since Bomtempo composed his first symphony before 1805, furthermore, his relationship with Beethoven (an enduring historiographical topic in Portuguese musicology, strongly connected to a nationalistic desire for prestige) might also be reconsidered: the Parisian premiere of Beethoven's first symphony took place only in 1807, despite the fact that his first two symphonies were published in 1801 and 1804 respectively.

The most remarkable contemporary accounts of Bomtempo's first symphony, and of his compositional skills in general, are those in which he is accused of being too serious, as shown in the anthology of references collected by Scherpereel. In 1810, for example, *Les tablettes de Polymnie* explained: 'As a composer he writes on a grand scale, with verve, yet one might reproach him for being insufficiently likeable. One finds in his work a sound technique, a competence, but he sacrifices all to science, and neglects that which produces agreeable effects'. He was particularly censured for the absence of appealing melodies in his work, a subject that provoked this anonymous explanation (perhaps from Bomtempo's own pen), published in 1809: 'There can be but two sorts of musical melody: the one *positive* that is composed solely of intervals formed naturally from the sounds of the consonances; the other *diatonic* that is composed of all the intermediary notes inspired by the relationships between consonances, from which it follows that when a musician has formed beautiful harmony, that is, he has produced his diatonic melody with great expression and taste, inspired by each concord, one may not say that he has not sung, since melody and song must be synonyms in music'. The predominance of this harmonic conception, together with the principle of motivic economy and coherence, is particularly evident in Bomtempo's first symphony, lending it a character of its own. The second symphony, meanwhile, presents more generous proportions and a greater presence of almost cantabile melodies. The two works share a dense and studied style of orchestral writing, whose matrix is entirely classical (not in evidence, for example, are the characteristic sound effects of French orchestral composers of the time, like Méhul).



There are several recordings of Bomtempo's symphonies, played by the following ensembles: the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra/Claudio Scimone (Portugalsom SP 4131), the Nova Filarmonia Portuguesa/Álvaro Cassuto (Movieplay Classic 3-11039) and the Hannover Philharmonic Orchestra (NDR)/César Viana (Strauss/PortugalSom SP 4291). The version released by Naxos is the most recent, and is executed by the Algarve Orchestra under Álvaro Cassuto, who is currently its Principal Guest Conductor. The recording was released in 2004, just two years after the establishment of the orchestra. The sound quality is diffuse and distant, and it sounds like a global and, in consequence, flat capture, almost as if the recording was intended as a document of a single, concrete performance. This matches Cassuto's artistic reading of the works, which is more objective than fundamentally interpretative (even if he adds two trumpets to the timpani part in the *Andante sostenuto* of the first symphony to assimilate it to 'his' models, Haydn and Mozart). Cassuto's approach to this predominantly classical style is, despite his clarity, not informed by a commitment to historical performance practice. This explains the lack of colour, strength and energy evident in his tiny orchestra. The proficiency of the instrumentalists, however, makes this a very acceptable recording, the worldwide presence of Naxos's catalogue thus providing a welcome means for further disseminating Bomtempo's music.

TERESA CASCUDO

