

The "Macao Hymno"

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Melchor Vela

In the repertoire of the military and municipal bands, works that allude to Macao or were written by local composers deserve special attention—all the more so because there are so very few of them. References can be found to the waltz "Macau" by J. Braga,¹ the pasodoble "Expedição a Macau em 1900" by Eusébio Placé,² the Macanese dance "Pantomina" by "D"³ and the pieces written by Alessio Benis⁴ during his tenure as bandmaster of the Banda Municipal, namely the military march "L'arrivo a Macao" and the one-step "Macau Alegre". Another work worthy of note is the anthem⁵ "Ao Leal Senado e ao povo de Macau" (frequently called the "Hymno a Macau", "Hymno de Macau" or "Macao Hymno"), by Melchor Vela.

The "Macao Hymno" calls for special attention not only due the fact that it is dedicated to the municipality, but also because for decades many aspects of its fate and whereabouts were unknown. To begin with, we do not know much about the life and works of Melchor Vela-until now, it was thought that, given the theme of this composition, its composer may have been born in Macao; this, however, is not true. The error is understandable, however, given his numerous ties to the Portuguese community in Asia: as early as 1889, there are references to his participation as a pianist in concerts at the "Club de Recreio" in Shanghai; between 1897 and 1901, the "Macao Hymno" was performed at least five times by the Macao Garrison Music Band in its bi-weekly concerts;8 and his march, "The Shanghai Jubilee", was performed by the same band on Sunday, May 27, 1897, in the Jardim de São Francisco.9 A few months later, the newspaper

O Porvir, the information bulletin of the Portuguese community in Hong Kong, highlighted the "vocal and instrumental" concert given on October 30, 1897, in St Patrick's Hall, Garden Road, to mark the inauguration of the Sociedade de Santa Cecília¹⁰ and where Vela's song "Ansia" was performed.

However, the absence of any reference to the name of this composer in the extensive and groundbreaking Macanese genealogy researched by Jorge Forjaz as well as the presence in the anthem's score of various English-language expressions (such as "bassoons" and "horns"), which goes against the prevalent use in Portugal of Italian terms, raise some doubts as to his origins.

The truth is that Melchor Vela was Spanish. All evidence indicates that he maintained close relationships with the Portuguese communities in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macao, and with the then president of the Leal Senado, "comendador" António Joaquim Basto (1848-1912),11 whom he met in 1896 during a diplomatic mission to Thailand. In various articles published in the newspaper Echo Macaense in 1896, Basto provides a detailed description of his trip and refers to the musician as the Spanish maestro and 'comendador' Vela, resident in Shanghai ("maestro hespanhol e commendador Vela, residente em Shanghae"). 12 In the minutes of the council session of March 10, 1897, chaired by Basto, we find in paragraph 9 the following record of a gift that was obviously created by Vela's own hand:

The council President said that maestro Vela had composed a "Hymno de Macau" and offered it

to the Leal Senado, having himself written the music for piano, as well as the score for band; the President was very pleased to present this work to his colleagues. The Leal Senado resolved to accept this thoughtful gift and to address a vote of thanks to maestro Vela, to whom such should be forwarded, informing him at the same time of the Leal Senado's decision to make a copy to be lithographed as well as other copies to popularise this anthem.¹³

Six weeks later, the minutes of the council session of April 28, 1897, record the composer's reply:

The despatch from "comendador" Melchor Vela was read, to the effect that he felt much obliged due to the good reception of the gift he offered to the Leal Senado and that, as a son of a friendly, neighbouring people, fraternal in the glorious annals of history, he would always be very content to address to the Leal Senado, by his services, his feelings of veneration and admiration.¹⁴

We do not know if the Leal Senado's resolve to make lithographs of the music was ever accomplished, given that no printed score of this work has come to light. Despite the heartfelt welcome given to the work and its immediate inclusion in the programme of the concert held on May 27, 1897, there was apparently no move toward adopting it as the municipality's official song, perhaps because its author was not Portuguese. While the anthem's manuscript was written some time in 1896 (or early 1897), its history before definitively being donated to the Macao Historical Archive, is rather curious and thus worth telling.

For reasons still to be fully elucidated, the manuscript, according to Pinto de Sá,¹⁵ ended up in the private library of Canon Morais Sarmento,¹⁶ and after his death was donated by the Chaptre of Macao Cathedral to Father Áureo Castro (1917-1993) who, at an unknown date, loaned it for use by the Macao Police Band. The former leader of the PSP band, Mr. Bernardo Lei, returned the manuscript to Fr. Castro in 1983, who then donated it to the Macao Historical Archive. In a footnote to Pinto de Sá's article, Beatriz Basto da Silva, then Director of the Archive, enthused over the recovery of the manuscript, explaining that a thorough investigation in 1980 had revealed that some of the titles of the Archive's files did not correspond to their contents, and that in the case of the "Macao

Hymno", although it was listed in the Archive' catalogue, the file was, in fact, empty. Indeed, in a set of documents dated 1979, it is possible to trace the existence of codex 317, which bears the following description: Anthem of Macao, composed and dedicated to the Leal Senado and to the people of Macao by Melchor Vela ("Hino de Macau, composto e dedicado ao Leal Senado e ao povo de Macau por Melchor Vela"). 17 In the corrected and exhaustive catalogue of all documentation from the Leal Senado existing in the Macao Historical Archive, published in 1983, the same codex is again reported, though this time with the indication that it is extant, but has not been sent to the Archive ("consta, mas não foi enviado ao A.H.M").18 But the footnote in Pinto de Sá's article—probably written after the manuscript was in fact returned in 1983—indicates that it had at last been recovered.

In October 2001, when seeking to consult the original, I was thus extremely surprised when the current director the Macao Historical Archive, Ms. Fátima Lau, told me that the whereabouts of the score was, once again, unknown. For this reason, I was obliged to consult the Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de *Macau*¹⁹ in which the work is, fortunately, reproduced. It must be clarified that the Macao Historical Archive possesses comprehensive holdings of most, if not all, of the Leal Senado documents from the years 1630 through 1975, a total of 1462 catalogue items. In the search for the manuscript, I thus consulted the minutes of Leal Senado sessions in the years 1896 and 1897, as well as correspondence received and sent by the Leal Senado in the same period, and other files where it might have been relocated, such as official requests, service contracts and minutes of the Council's sessions. In the Correspondence Received files I found a gap from 1895 to 1901: the last surviving register is dated December 18, 1895, while the next one is January 4, 1901.²⁰ In the wake of my recent investigation, I must confirm that the manuscript is effectively lost at the present time.

From the *Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Macau*, it is known that the manuscript comprised a total of thirteen pages, including the cover sheet, which bore the words "Macao Hymno – Espressamente composto e dedicado ao Povo de Macao O Leal Senado por Melchor Vela, Novembro de 1896, Partitura para Banda" [Macao Anthem – Expressly composed and Dedicated to The People of Macao The Leal Senado

by Melchor Vela, November 1896, Score for Band]. Given its martial nature, the prevalence of trenchant semiquavers and the punctuated division of beats (dotted quavers and semiquavers), which aims to effect constant accentuation (which lends security to the pace when marching), I believe it is correct to call it a March, conceived according to the ternary form (scheme A-B-A) that is characteristic of the genre. Section A runs from measures 1 to 36, section B from measures 37 to 70; the recapitulation consists of the identical repetition of section A, to which is added a coda of 16 measures (71-86), providing the conclusion to the work.

The first section is written in the base key, Eb major, and begins with a brief two-measure preparatory introduction, in crescendo, in the percussion section. Next, the first subject (announced by piccolo, flute, oboe, 1st and 2nd clarinets in Eb, 1st clarinet in Bb, 1st cornet, baritone and bombardon), which is masculine, energetic and rhythmic, enters in the tonic key. The melody is divided into two phrases—the first ending in a half-cadence in measure 10, which is followed by a slightly modified repetition to close the phrase in a full cadence on measure 18. Next, the second, contrasting subject is introduced in the dominant key. With the indication "armonioso", the second theme is performed by the 1st clarinet in Bb, alto sax in Eb, 1st and 2nd trumpets and baritone. It sports an asymmetric period, divided into two parts: the first segment is irregular (10 measures, from measures 19 to 28), with a fleeting modulation to G minor (provoked by the introduction of an F#, characteristic note of the new key) in measure 24, ending in the dominant chord that resolves in the following measure to the tonic chord (Eb); the second segment, of 8 measures, is developed from measures 29 to 36. In measure 35, the dominant seventh chord of Bb major (f4, a4, c4, eb), resolves into the dominant seventh chord of Eb major (bb, d\, f\, ab) in measure 36, re-introducing the basic key of Eb major in preparation for the repetition.

The second section (Trio), is more melodic and "feminine" in character, being in the subdominant key. An asymmetric period is divided into four phrases: The first is 8 measures long and develops from measures 37 to 44; the second is 10 measures long and develops from measures 45 to 54, with a fleeting modulation to the key of C minor; the third lasts 8 measures (55 to 62); while the last one is also 8 measures, and runs from measures 63 to 70, concluding in a full cadence

in Ab major. Using the secondary dominant chord (ab, ch, eb, which is simultaneously the tonic of Ab major tonic and subdominant of Eb major), the main key is reintroduced to prepare for the repetition of the first section, which is linked, at measure 18, to a coda of 16 measures. Clearly affirmative and conclusive, the coda is based above all on the rhythmic elements of the first section, here exploited with some chromaticism.

Generally speaking, the melodic lines, as might be expected, are developed in a homophonic manner, with almost total absence of counterpoint, except for measures 21 and 31, where the cornets and the side drum respond to the melody heard in the two preceding measures.

As no other works by this composer are known, it is difficult to reconstitute his working method and the various compositional stages the piece went through before reaching its final version. Both the hasty handwriting and the abbreviations indicate that the manuscript must have been prepared in a rather short period of time—perhaps the result of a (private) commitment between the composer and the president of the Leal Senado? It has not been possible to ascertain any of these details.

The edition included as an appendix to this article standardises the musical text, completing missing measures, adjusting the instrumental arrangement to current usage, and updating the indications for transposing instruments (the original part of the piccolo, for instance, is written for an instrument tuned in Db, long in disuse), which in the original manuscript do not correspond to the ones currently used in band scores. For a more detailed account of this edition, please refer to the editor's notes.

Author's note: This edition standardises the musical text, completing missing measures, adjusting the instrumental arrangement to current usage, and updating the indications for the transposing instruments, which in the original manuscript does not correspond to the one currently used in band scores. Italian names of instruments were chosen throughout, even though English names such as "Horns" and "Basssons" are found in the source. In measure 2, the first word in the indication of tempo is not fully legible. It is not possible to ascertain without doubt whether the composer wanted to indicate "molto energico" or "allo [allegro] energico". However, it seemed that the indication "molto energico" was more in line with the rhythm's design. I also added metronome markings, besides introducing some dynamic and articulation signs. In the original, the form of the piece is not well notated, so a repetition in the first section had to be added, as were the indications D.S. al fine and D.S. al coda, which replaced the cumbersome "Ripete come dalla lettera A alla B. pagine 1. 2. 3. e segue Trio" and "Ripete come dalla lettera A per 15 misure e segue Finale". The expression "Finale" was replaced by "Coda", more appropriate to the solution I have adopted.

NOTES

- Jerónimo Maria Braga (1854-1914), organist of Macao Cathedral. See Jorge Forjaz, Famílias Macaenses, vol. 1 (Macao: Fundação Oriente, 1996), p. 584. This waltz appears for the first time in the programme of the Banda de Música da Guarda Policial de Macau, published in the Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau e Timor, no. 51, 22.XII.1892, p. 492 [henceforth: BO]. There is also a reference to the waltz "Adelaide", also by Braga, performed by the Banda de Música da Guarnição de Macau on August 18, 1904. Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau, no. 33, 13.VIII. 1904, p. 258.
- This work first appears without mention of the composer in the concert programme of July 10, 1902, performed by the Banda de Música da Guarnição de Macau and published in the *Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau*, no. 27, 5.VII.1902, p. 225. However, in another programme, found in BO no. 49, 5.XII.1903, pp. 371-372, it was possible to identify the author as Eusébio Placé. The "Expedição a Macau em 1900" by Eusébio Placé quickly entered the band's repertoire and was performed at least six times between 1902 and 1907.
- Between April 1904 and October 1907, the Banda de Música da Guarnição de Macau presented a series of works bearing the same initial, "D". This initial might refer to the composer João Damasceno Fernandes, a first-class military musician originally from Goa, who between 1917 and 1919 assumed the direction of the Municipal Band in the absence of Eusébio Placé, or to the composer S. D. Monteiro (referred in the Catholic newspaper A Voz do Crente, no. 194, 6.IX.1890, p. 288, as Servulo D. Monteiro, conductor of the St. Joseph's Seminary band), composer of the march "Inesperado", performed by the Banda de Música da Guarda Policial de Macau on August 17, 1893 (BO no. 32, 12.VIII.1893, p. 377). Besides the Macanese dance mentioned here, "D" also composed (or arranged) the following pieces: the "Hungariana" dance, the "Gratitude" gallop, the polka "La plus belle rose", the gallop "A partida do comboyo", the "Congratulação" march, the "À passagem do Regimento" march (also referred in BO no. 38, 17.IX.1904, p. 295 as composed by Moraes), the "A Caçada" polka, the "Amanda" gallop, the pot-pourri from "O Fausto Petiz" (referred since 1875 in the BOs as an "opera by Offenbach"), the passa [sic] calle "El Bombeiro" [sic], the "Harmans" gallop (also attributed to S. Siqueira in BO no. 29, 22. VII.1893, p. 354), the "Estudiantina" tango (also referred in BO no. 33, 13.VIII.1904, p. 258 as the waltz "La Estudiantina de Waldteufel"), the tango "Ai! Joaquina", the "Bartholomans" quick march, the serenade "Echo", the "Brids [sic] Maids" barn dance, and the pasodoble "O regresso" (see Boletim Oficial do Governo da Provincia de Macau, no. 17, of 23.IV.1904 to no. 42, of 19.X. 1907). Why this musician did not wish to identify himself is not known. Taking into account that Damasceno Fernandes worked and lived in Macao at least from 1893 until 1928 (the first reference to a J. D. Fernandes appears in the BO no. 9 of 4.IV.1893, p. 101, and the last in a letter written by Isidoro Maria da Costa to the newspaper A Verdade, on April 26, 1928), is reasonable to surmise that he is the mysterious composer/arranger "D". Moreover, the presence among his compositions of a "Macanese dance" may help substantiate this supposition.
- 4 For more information about Alessio Benis, Eusébio Placé and the military and municipal bands, see my article "The Tradition of Bandas de Música in Macao", pp. 6-44 of this issue.
- 5 The first reference to a performance of this anthem appears in the Boletim Oficial do Governo da Provincia de Macau no. 19, of 8.V.1897, p. 274.
- 6 Nearly a century after its first performance, in 1994, the Macao Cultural Institute, the institution in charge of the Macao Historical

- Archive, asked me to prepare a modern rendering of score based on Vela's autographed manuscript housed there. After being revised, edited and processed by computer, copies were distributed to various institutions, among them the Macao Police Band, which performed it for the public in June 1998. However, it must be mentioned that there is no information to the effect that this anthem was ever officially adopted by the Leal Senado. Such is the only way to understand the fact that it was not presented in public for so many decades and was thus eventually forgotten. Even so, when looking for information on the internet about composer Melchor Vela, I was surprised to find the following reference: "The Hymn of Macau, which is the unofficial city anthem of the City of the Name of God, Macau, was composed by Macanese [sic] musician Melchor Vela in 1896, as a 'dedication to all citizens of Macau'. The anthem was performed by the Brass Band of the Macao Public Security Police in June 1998, during a City Day event." [Referring to the June 24 Municipal Day]. "Hymn to Macau" [Internet], available from http://members.tripod.co.uk/macau1999/av/anthem.htm [Accessed July 17, 2000]. This information is no longer available at this website. It was replaced by "An Independent Macau Website in the United Kingdom," available at http://members.lycos.co. uk/macau1999/left.shtml> [Accessed July 21, 2002].
- 7 Cf. news reports published in the newspaper O Progresso, 8.II.1889, p. 2, and 3.V.1889, p. 2.
- Beatriz Basto da Silva, "Macau, o exército e a cultura", Revista de Cultura 14 (1988), 87-93 (p. 90), says that "o Século XX é saudado com uma marcha original no 1.º concerto de Janeiro, um tal Melchor Vela compõe o 'Hino do Leal Senado e ao Povo de Macau'..." [the twentieth century is hailed with an original march in the January 1st concert, one Melchor Vela composed the 'Anthem of the Leal Senado and the People of Macao'...]. This statement is incorrect. By 1900, the anthem had already been performed twice in public and was therefore no longer a novelty for local audiences. See programmes published in the Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau, no. 19, 8.V.1897, p. 274, no. 6, 5.II.1898, p. 52, no. 15, 14.IV.1900, p. 199, no. 28, 14.VII.1900, pp. 369-370, and no. 48, 30.XI.1901, p. 306.
- 9 Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau, no. 26, de 26.V.1897, pp. 337-338.
- 10 O Porvir, 20.XI.1897, p. 2.
- 11 Lawyer and journalist born in Macao. Among his other activities, he served as Secretary of the Portuguese diplomatic missions to Japan (1882) and Siam (1896), and as president of the Leal Senado. He was a member of the Royal Geographic Society and the Royal Historic Society of London. His honors included knighthoods of the Orders of the Rising Sun in Japan, of the White Elephant in Siam, of St Sylvester at the Vatican, of the French Légion d'Honneur, and "comendador" of the Ordem de Cristo in Portugal, by royal charter of 28.VI.1894. See Jorge Forjaz, op. cit, vol. 1, pp. 475-476.
- 2 António Joaquim Basto, "Impressões d'uma viagem a Bangkok" [Impressions of a trip to Bangkok], Echo Macaense, 24.V.1896, p. 2, 31.V.1896, p. 2, and 21.VI.1896, p. 3. The articles mainly concern themselves with the narrative of the Portuguese diplomatic mission to the kingdom of Siam (present-day Thailand), undertaken by the Governor of Macao and minister plenipotentiary José Maria de Souza Horta e Costa (Governor of Macao 1894-1897, 1st term). Aboard the French steamer Salazie, which transported the delegation, Basto met, among other personages, the maestro Melchor Vela and his wife, whom the chronicler refers to as "Madame Vela (...), cantora de primeira plana, Italiana de nação, e alem d'isso, casada com um maestro de reputação assente" [Madame Vela (...),

- a first-rate singer, Italian by nationality and, what's more, married to a "maestro" with a solid reputation].
- "Disse o vereador Presidente que o maestro Vela compoz um Hymno de Macau e offereceu-o ao Leal Senado, escrevendo elle proprio a musica para o piano, bem como a partitura para a banda, e elle Presidente tinha muito prazer em apresentar esse trabalho aos seus collegas. O Leal Senado resolveu acceitar esse delicado brinde e que seja consignado um voto de agradecimento ao referido maestro Vela, a quem se deverá officiar n'esse sentido, communicnado-lhe ao mesmo tempo a resolução que o Leal Senado toma de mandar tirar uma copia para mandar lithographar e bem assim outras copias para popularisar esse hymno". Minutes of the council session of March 10, 1897. Arquivo Histórico de Macau [henceforth: ArqHistMo], Fundo Documental do Leal Senado, ref. AH/LS/360, microfilm A0193, p. 68. Also published in the newspaper Echo Macaense, 28.III.1897, p. 2.
- "Foi lido o officio do comendador Melchor Vela significando quanto se acha penhorado pelo bom acolhimento que foi feito ao brinde que offereceu ao Leal Senado, e declarando que na qualidade de filho de um povo amigo, visinho e irmão até nos fastos gloriosos da historia, teria sempre muita satisfação em testemunhar ao Leal Senado pelos seus serviços, os seus sentimentos de veneração e admiração". Minutes of the council session of April 28, 1897, deposited in the ArqHistMo, Fundo Documental do Leal Senado, ref. AH/LS/360, microfilm A0193, p. 82. Also published in the newspaper *Echo Macaense*, 23.V.1897, p. 2.
- 15 Version recounted by J. A. Pinto de Sá in the article "A propósito de um manuscrito", Arquivos de Macau Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Macau, vol. 2 (July-December 1983), pp. 134-135. That same issue of the bulletin contains, between pages 136 and 148, a full photographic reproduction of the manuscript.
- The chapter António Maria de Morais Sarmento (1896-1958) was born in Viana do Castelo, Portugal, and at the age of 18 left for the Far East. He remained in India for two years and in 1896 came to Macao as an attendant to Bishop Dom José Manuel de Carvalho, and enrolled in St Joseph's Seminary to conclude his religious studies. He was ordained in 1905 and thereafter exercised countless activities in the Macao diocese. As Secretary to the Bishop of Macao, in 1906 he received the committee of Salesian priests who came to take charge of the Orphanage of the Immaculate Conception. In 1908 he was appointed a member of the Directors Commission of that same orphanage, and in 1910 was designated parish priest of Coloane Island. That same year, upon proposal by King Manuel II (r. 1908-1910), he was appointed chantre of the Macao Cathedral. He also worked in journalism; from June 1929 to July 1931, and

- from January to December 1941, he was Director of the monthly Arquivos de Macau, publication whose aim, according to Manuel Teixeira, was the "reproduction of documents of historical interest found in the colony's archives." According to some commentators, he was also a great collector, counting in his private residence a vast collection of Chinese porcelains, festival programmes, recitals, liturgical texts, books and diverse documents recovered during his many visits to the city's antiquaries. Regarding the fact that the manuscript of Melchor Vela's "Macao Hymno" ended up in his hands, I believe three explanations may be possible: that it was via his connection with the Salesians, who had a band at the Orfanato da Imaculada Conceição; that he acquired it at one of Macao's many antique shops; or that he came across it in the course of his duties as Director of the Arquivos de Macau. For more information, see Pedro Dá Mesquita, "Padre Sarmento: o capelão descontraído" [Father Sarmento: the Easygoing Chaplain], Revista Macau 36 (1995), pp. 57-66 and Manuel Teixeira, Imprensa Periódica Portuguesa no Extremo Oriente, facsimile of the first edn. (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1999), p. 135.
- "Lista de códices do Arquivo do Leal Senado da Câmara de Macau, recebida do Leal Senado em 1979" [List of codices of the Leal Senado's archives, received in 1979 by the Historical Archive of Macao]. Arquivos de Macau Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Macau, vol. 1 (January 1981), p. 34.
- 18 Arquivos de Macau Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Macau, vol. 2 (July-December 1983), p. 24.
- 19 Ibia
- It is possible that some of these documents were destroyed during the incidents of December 1966. The Leal Senado was attacked by a crowd, which burnt part of the archives. On 3 December 1966, stimulated by the excitement of the ongoing Cultural Revolution, a large group of students and teachers from local pro-China secondary schools gathered next to the Praia Grande palace, seat of the Macao government. In an attempt to restore order, Governor Nobre de Carvalho (Governor of Macao, 1966-1974) decreed martial law and a compulsory curfew. Rioting continued until the next day; the army was ordered to intervene and began patrolling the city, but was unable to prevent more skirmishing. The final toll was eight dead, 160 wounded and 45 arrests. The incidents ended on January 29, 1967, when Portugal apologised and acceded the demands made by the demonstrators. The events have become known as the "1, 2, 3" Incident, as they began on the third day of the 12th month. For more information see José Pedro Castanheira, Os 58 Dias que Abalaram Macau (Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1999).















































