

# THE PRESENCE OF THE VIOLA CAIPIRA IN KILZA SETTI'S MISSA CAIÇARA: OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS

## A PRESENÇA DA VIOLA CAIPIRA NA MISSA CAIÇARA DE KILZA SETTI: ASPECTOS OBJETIVOS E SUBJETIVOS

Eliana Monteiro da Silva  
Universidade de São Paulo  
[ms.eliana@usp.br](mailto:ms.eliana@usp.br)

### Abstract

This article analyzes the Brazilian composer Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara* (*Caiçara Mass*), focusing on the fact that the *viola caipira* (peasant viola) was widely used in this piece, along with other instruments that are frequently employed in this musical genre. Some objective and subjective aspects of the compositional process of this piece are discussed here, as an attempt to clarify the technical and stylistic procedures used by the musician in her *oeuvre*. Among the objective aspects is the employment of specific musical elements typically found in the fishing communities' music. Two of them are strumming chords and rhythmic motives that derive from the Portuguese *fandango*. On a more subjective tone Kilza pays tribute to *São Gonçalo* by quoting tunes that were traditionally sang in folk festivities. *São Gonçalo* is a saint who is worshipped by the fishing communities for protecting infertile married women and prostitutes. Due to the limited amount of publications on Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara*, the main sources used were: an interview with the composer, which occurred in 2016; Kilza's Doctoral research about the coastline communities' music; José Luiz Chamorro Ribalta's Masters Dissertation about *Missa caiçara*, and the score and recording of the piece itself.

**Keywords:** *Viola Caiçara*; *Missa Caiçara*; Kilza Setti; Women Composers; Brazilian Music.

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa a *Missa Caiçara* da compositora brasileira Kilza Setti, enfocando sua escolha de incluir a viola caipira entre os instrumentos frequentemente utilizados neste gênero musical. São discutidos alguns aspectos objetivos e subjetivos do processo composicional da obra, com objetivo de esclarecer os procedimentos técnicos e estilísticos usados por sua autora. Entre os aspectos objetivos encontra-se o emprego de elementos musicais específicos encontrados na música das comunidades de pescadores, como acordes rasqueados da viola caipira e motivos rítmicos derivados do *fandango* português. Em caráter mais subjetivo Kilza presta homenagem a São Gonçalo, santo louvado pela comunidade pesqueira pela proteção a mulheres inférteis e prostitutas, citando uma melodia tradicionalmente cantada em suas festas. Devido à pequena quantidade de trabalhos existentes sobre a *Missa Caiçara* de Kilza Setti, as principais fontes utilizadas foram uma entrevista realizada com a compositora em 2016, sua pesquisa de Doutorado acerca da música das comunidades caiçaras e a Dissertação de Mestrado de José Luiz Chamorro Ribalta sobre a peça, além da partitura e gravação da música em questão.

**Palavras-chave:** Viola Caipira; Missa Caiçara; Kilza Setti; Mulheres Compositoras; Música Brasileira.

## List of Figures

1. Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara* autograph
2. *Kyrie*, measures 18 to 23: lyrics are presented in Latin and in Portuguese
3. Kilza's autograph of the São Gonçalo's tune. Measures 1 to 7 show the rhythmic motive played by the viola
4. *Missa Caiçara's Gloria*, measures 3 to 9. *Viola caipira's* part quotes the standard tune of *São Gonçalo*
5. *Gloria*, measures 111 to 117. Choir repeats the motive played by the *viola caipira*

6. *Credo*, measures 44 to 48. Violin, viola and box's scores
7. *Sanctus*, measures 61 to 67. Syncopated rhythm recalls Brazilian *modinha*
8. Tenor melodic line in *Kyrie*, measure 18
9. *Agnus Dei*, measures 1 to 5. Voices in canon recall Tenor's theme in *Kyrie*
10. *Agnus Dei*, measures 38 to 42. The instruments return announces a climax in the Coda
11. Theme of *Credo* in the climax moment of *Agnus Dei*, measures 64 to 66
12. Kilza's image of Brazilian *São Gonçalo*
13. *Gloria*, measures 50 to 52. *São Gonçalo* tune sang by sopranos and altos
14. Catalog of the *II Festival de Música Sacra*
15. Interior part of the catalog shows Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara*

In 1990, the Brazilian composer Kilza Setti was invited by the Peruíbe's City Hall to create an *oeuvre* to be presented in the city. The Secretary of Culture Luis Augusto Milanese, who knew about Kilza's Ethnological studies from previous decades, which were done in Brazil and abroad, suggested she compose a peasant mass.

Although the idea seemed interesting, Kilza's researches had not specifically addressed peasant communities' culture and music, but the ones of the inhabitants of São Paulo's coastline. Consequently, she decided to pay tribute to the *Caiçara* by creating a Mass devoted to them, which was received with enthusiasm by the Peruíbe's City Hall.

Beyond the thankful feeling she nurtured for those people, Kilza saw in this enterprise an opportunity to call the public's attention to some urgent problems they were facing at that time, like the real estate speculation in the region, the threat against their customs and traditions and the danger of losing their propriety. By using traditional features of their music, such as melodies, rhythms and specific instruments (e.g. the

*viola caipira*<sup>1</sup>), she intended to highlight the richness of their culture and the splendor of such heritage. In addition, the composer wanted to discuss the life of women in some remote areas of Brazil and review the way they have been oppressed by the patriarchal education and the rigid religious rules. She managed to problematize this issue by invoking São Gonçalo and the popular tunes that were related to him in local festivities. Originally, this saint came from Portugal, but later on he started to be worshipped by the *Caiçara* for protecting prostitutes and infertile married women.

All the aforementioned issues pervaded Kilza's decisions on the compositional procedures of *Missa Caiçara*. This article aims at pointing out the objective and subjective aspects of those choices, clarifying some technical and stylistic features employed by the composer in her work.

The main sources used in this analysis were: an interview with the composer made in the first semester of 2016; the Masters research by José Luiz Chamorro Ribalta on *Missa Caiçara*<sup>2</sup>; Kilza's book entitled *Ubatuba nos cantos das praias: estudo do caiçara paulista e de sua produção musical*<sup>3</sup>; and the recording of the *Missa Caiçara* produced by Radio Cultura FM of São Paulo in 1996. The two scores of the mass, one being original and other one edited by Ribalta in his work, were also extensively used.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many similarities among the peasant and the coastal cultures, which explains, for instance, the use of the *viola caipira* for the *Caiçara*. The more relevant differences are due to the native region of the immigrants who colonized such areas, in the Brazil colonial times.

<sup>2</sup> The specific data of this work can be seen in the References section of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> *Beachy songs of Ubatuba: studies on the Caiçara from São Paulo and their musical production* (Kilza's PhD).

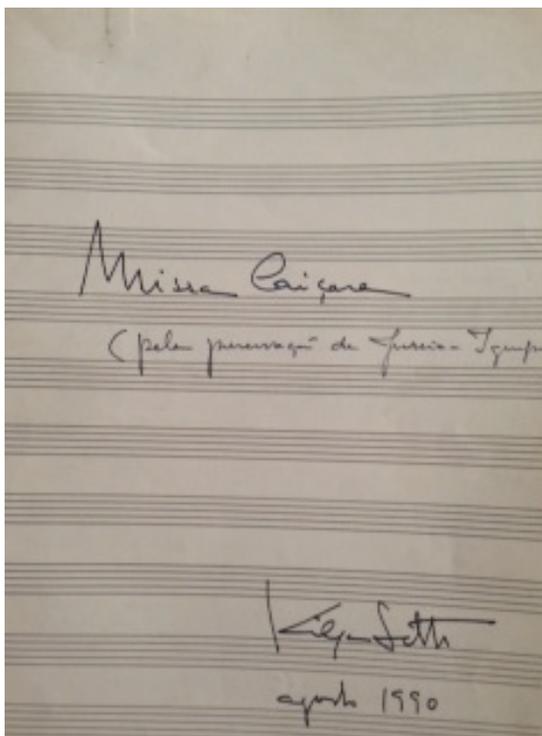


Figure 1 – Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara* autograph.  
Source: Kilza Setti's personal archive.

## ***Missa Caiçara*: objective aspects of its compositional process**

In the present analysis, the musical elements are considered objective aspects of the compositional process. One of them is the fact that the traditional form of the mass, which was organized in parts, was kept intact. These parts were named *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. Kilza simultaneously used both Latin and Portuguese idioms for the singing parts, since she wanted the mass to be presented in theatres and churches<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> According to the 1990's liturgics rules, the Church was not allowed to use texts in Latin, but in the official language of the country as to facilitate the understanding of the lyrics. However, in theaters, Latin was the common language used in musical performances.

I began to sketch the main traits of each part as an attempt to structure them progressively. At some points I felt as if the religious ambience of traditional masses became more prominent; at others, like in *Gloria* or *Credo*, the *Caiçara* religious style prevailed (SETTI, 1990)<sup>5</sup>.

The orchestration kept the classical format, i.e., a vocal ensemble singing a *capella*. To establish a connection with the title *Missa Caiçara*, the composer decided to add violins, *caixas*<sup>6</sup> and *violas caiçaras* in the accompaniment of some parts, since they are typical instruments of the coastline villages. Usually a solo soprano voice is responsible for the lyrics in Portuguese, while the other voices sing in Latin. Kilza took advantage of both idioms' sonorities, offering a simultaneous translation from Latin to Portuguese to the audience. A *Caiçara* way of singing – slow, melismatic and often repeating the last syllables – is indicated in almost the entire work. “[...] I proposed some free soloist singings, asking for glottis emissions and voices in a ‘tipe’<sup>7</sup> manner – usual procedures of vocal *Caiçara* music” (*Idem*)<sup>8</sup>.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble. It consists of five staves: SOLO, SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR, and BASS. The time signature is 3/4. The SOLO part is marked 'Recitative' and has lyrics 'Se nhor Tende piedade de nós'. The SOPRANO, ALTO, and TENOR parts have lyrics in Latin: 'Chris te e le e le i son Ky'. The BASS part has lyrics in Portuguese: 'Chris te e le e le i son Ky'. The score includes musical notation such as notes, rests, and a fermata.

Figure 2 – Kyrie, measures 18 to 23: lyrics are presented in Latin and in Portuguese.

<sup>5</sup> “Esbocei inicialmente os principais traços de cada uma das partes da missa e fui estruturando progressivamente cada parte. Em certos momentos transparece o clima litúrgico das tradicionais missas; em outros, como no Glória e Credo, o estilo religioso caiçara predominou”.

<sup>6</sup> The *caixa* (box) is a kind of drum.

<sup>7</sup> The *tipe* is a way of singing with a very high-pitched voice.

<sup>8</sup> “[...] propus alguns solos em canto livre, recomendando emissões de glote e vozes à maneira do “tipe”- procedimentos presentes à música vocal caiçara”.

The choir sings in all parts of the mass. Kilza dedicated special attention to some duets of sopranos, who sometimes sing separately of the group. The *violas caipiras* enter in the *Gloria* part, which is a little faster than the *Kyrie*<sup>9</sup>. They play rhythmic motives through *acordes rasqueados* (strumming chords), inspired in the old Portuguese *fandango* dance. Kilza quotes the viola's part of "a typically standard tune of the São Gonçalo sacred dance that is very popular in the coastline (SETTI, 1990)", which had been scored by her in 1966.

Bertioga  
11 setembro 1966

São Gonçalo  
Dúz 22

Viola: Caique  
Registro referente ao mater  
recolhido no dia 11 de setembro  
ver meu Relatório no 1

Kilza Setti

Introdução  
de  
Viola

Canto

Viola

Ô lo va-do São Gon- qa-lo Ô lo- va-do São gon-  
qa-lo, - ca sa mentê-ro das ve lha - ca. sa mentê- ro das

The image shows a handwritten musical score on a single sheet of paper. At the top left, it is dated 'Bertioga 11 setembro 1966'. The title 'São Gonçalo' is written in the center, with 'Dúz 22' below it. To the right, there is a note: 'Viola: Caique Registro referente ao mater recolhido no dia 11 de setembro ver meu Relatório no 1'. The signature 'Kilza Setti' is written below this note. The score is divided into three systems. The first system is labeled 'Introdução de Viola' and shows a rhythmic pattern of chords on a single staff. The second system is labeled 'Canto' and 'Viola', with the vocal line and a viola accompaniment line. The lyrics 'Ô lo va-do São Gon- qa-lo Ô lo- va-do São gon-' are written below the vocal line. The third system continues the lyrics 'qa-lo, - ca sa mentê-ro das ve lha - ca. sa mentê- ro das' and shows the viola accompaniment with some crossed-out notes. The tempo marking 'Allegro' is written above the first system.

Figure 3 – Kilza's autograph of the São Gonçalo's tune. Measures 1 to 7 show the rhythmic motive played by the viola. Source: Kilza Setti's personal archive.

<sup>9</sup> However, an introduction is made by the violas in the Radio Cultura's recording, where all the main themes of the mass are presented. Such an introduction was created by the interpreters in that very occasion, and approved by Kilza Setti. The introduction was not added to the score.

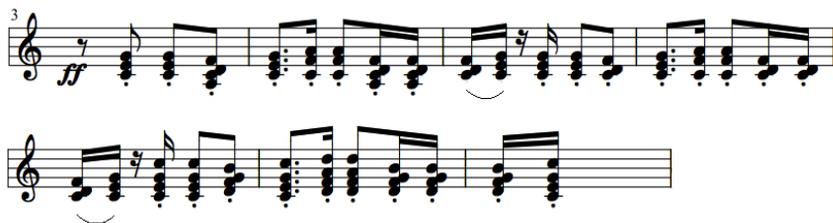


Figure 4 – *Missa Caiçara's Gloria*, measures 3 to 9.  
*Viola caipira's* part quotes the standard tune of São Gonçalo.

The choir presents the same theme later, as can be viewed in the next figure.

SOPRANO  
 ALTO  
 TENOR  
 BASS

Vós que ti rais o pe ca do do mun do ai, a co lhei a nos - sa  
 Vós que ti rais o pe ca do do mun do ai, a co lhei a nos - sa  
 a co lhei a nos - sa  
 sú pli ca a co lhei a nos - sa sú pli ca  
 sú pli ca a co lhei a nos - sa sú pli ca  
 sú pli ca a co lhei a nos - sa sú pli ca  
 a co lhei a nos - sa sú pli ca

Figure 5 – *Gloria*, measures 111 to 117.  
 Choir repeats the motive played by the *viola caipira*.

Kilza did not include arpeggio playing in the *viola caipira* scores. She said that the style was not used by the coastline people and she imagined the violas to be performed by them. In her words: "Referring to the 10 strings viola, I just used it in the reinforcing strumming chords, once the fingerstyle was rare in the *Caiçara* religious music" (*Idem*)<sup>10</sup>. She continued saying that "The original performance should stimulate the involvement of the coastline musicians (with no musical background) to accompany the Peruibe's choir"<sup>11</sup>.

In *Credo*, Kilza introduced two other instruments that were frequently used in the *Caiçara* music: the violin (or the *rabeca*), and the *caixa*. The melodic and rhythmic motives in this part is that of the *xiba* dance, also known as *bate-pé*. The *violas caipiras* play strummed chords, emphasizing the pulse and the tonality of G Major<sup>12</sup>.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin, Viola (V.C.), and Boxes (Caxixá). The score is in 2/4 time and consists of five measures. The Violin part is a melodic line in G major, starting on G4 and moving through A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, 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Figure 7 – *Sanctus*, measures 61 to 67. Syncopated rhythm recalls Brazilian *modinha*.

In order to finalize the mass, *Agnus Dei* joins all the voices, instruments and themes of the piece in a big Coda. Kilza starts with the choir in canon, remembering the melody sang by the tenor in the first part of *Missa Caiçara*, *Kyrie*. The fourth interval A/D is emphasized in *Agnus Dei*, both in the melodic line and between the voices in counterpoint.



Figure 8 – Tenor melodic line in *Kyrie*, measure 18.

Figure 9 – *Agnus Dei*, measures 1 to 5. Voices in canon recall Tenor's theme in *Kyrie*.

The *violas caipiras*, violins and *caixas* enter in measure 42, after the soprano's phrase *Agnus Dei dona nobis pacem, dona nobis pacem*. The instruments' entrance prepares a climaxing point in the piece, where the themes of *Credo* and *Kyrie* are alternately sung by the choir.

SOPRANO  
 Viola Caipira  
 Violin  
 Box

A gnus Dei donna nobis Paccem donna nobis Pac cem

Figure 10 – *Agnus Dei*, measures 38 to 42.  
 The instruments return announces a climax in the Coda.

SOPRANO  
 ALTO  
 TENOR  
 BASS  
 V.C.  
 Violin  
 Box

Figure 11 – Theme of *Credo* in the climax moment of *Agnus Dei*, measures 64 to 66.

## Subjective aspects

On a more subjective tone, Kilza brought the *São Gonçalo* memory to her Mass to discuss the women situation in some peripheral zones of Brazil, where they have been mostly oppressed by the patriarchal education and the rigid religious rules. The so-called *Santo Violeiro* (violinist saint) is said to represent a protector of both prostitutes and infertile married women. The melody and rhythm of the *São Gonçalo* sacred dance, practiced in festivities dedicated to him, would free these women's souls, giving them new lives and opportunities. According to Kilza, the originally Portuguese saint has been deeply worshiped for the Brazilian *Caçara*, who had even created a national image of him playing the *viola caipira*.



Figure 12 — Kilza's image of Brazilian São Gonçalo.  
Source: Kilza Setti's personal archive.

The legend of *São Gonçalo* came from Portugal. Before being sanctified, *Gonçalo* had been a bishop in Amarante. Portuguese tradition says that he used to dance over thumbtacks to sacrifice himself and dispose of his sins. He also called the prostitutes of the region to help them saving their souls through the rite.

"The therapist power of the dance employed by *São Gonçalo* to fight against the prostitution is known by every musician of Ubatuba" (SETTI, 1985, p. 112)<sup>13</sup>. Aside of this fact there is another version which attests that he answers to any prayer's supplication, mainly those related to women infertility. When studying in Portugal, to better understand the metropolitan influence in the Brazilian music, Kilza testified some practices adopted in parties dedicated to *São Gonçalo*, like the manufacture of candies in phallic forms alluding to the saint's relations with sexual issues.

The Portuguese heritage present in the [*Caiçara*] worship to *São Gonçalo* is undeniable, as though as his relation with certain rites of fertility, through magic practices with phallic symbols and the superstitions related to the wedding (*Ibid*, p. 111)<sup>14</sup>.

Nevertheless, the image of the saint with the *viola caipira* seems to be a Brazilian contribution. According to Kilza, the representation of the saint playing the instrument is completely unknown in the Iberian Peninsula. One fisherman told her that "one person found him in the riverside with the *viola* in hands and asked: — Which saint is this? And a voice answered: — This is the *São Gonçalo* [...] He used to play the *viola* and sing" (*Ibid*, p. 112)<sup>15</sup>.

In her contact with the coastline communities, Kilza observed the oppressive situation of most of the women, both because of the strict

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<sup>13</sup> "A função da *dança de São Gonçalo*, como prática terapêutica utilizada pelo santo para combater a prostituição das mulheres, é conhecida por todos os músicos de Ubatuba".

<sup>14</sup> "É inegável a herança portuguesa do culto a *São Gonçalo*, bem como sua relação com certos ritos de fertilidade, mediante práticas mágicas com símbolos fálicos e de superstições relativas ao casamento".

<sup>15</sup> "Dizem que foi um que achou ele na beira do rio, c'oa violinha na mão, então o que achou perguntou: — Que santo será esse? E uma voz respondeu: — Esse se chama o santo *São Gonçalo* [...] Ele tocava violinha e cantava". The incorrect words were quoted by Kilza Setti exactly as they were pronounced by the speaker.

religious rules and for the imperative male chauvinism. Those who were married not only suffered with policies against birth control, but also with prejudice when infertile. The ones who happened to be single mothers could be banned from their families, sometimes falling in the prostitution field. Despite all these facts, Kilza observed their habit to sing all the time, either in sad or in happy situations. The *São Gonçalo* benevolence towards these women represented an enormous relief in their everyday life.

The great respect and sorority nurtured by the composer to these brave women explain the important role *São Gonçalo* melody and rhythm play in the *Missa Caiçara*. Kilza understood that the sacred and supernatural symbols took part in their very conception of the reality.

For the *Caiçara* it is neither important to merge ordinary facts with holy issues nor keeping the miracles' power to serious situations. He claims for the supernatural all the time he faces difficulties or when the solutions seem to be hard to achieve, once he not only blends natural and supernatural, but also perceives them as a complementary process (SETTI, 1985, p. 235)<sup>16</sup>.

The image shows a musical score for two voices, soprano and alto, in 2/4 time. The music is in a simple, homophonic style. The lyrics are: "Se nhor Deus rei dos céus Deus pai to do po de ro so". The soprano part has a melodic line with some grace notes, while the alto part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Figure 13 – *Gloria*, measures 50 to 52. *São Gonçalo* tune sang by sopranos and altos.

<sup>16</sup> “Para o caiçara não importa misturar, ao sagrado, fatos corriqueiros, nem sequer reservar os poderes do milagre para situações mais graves. Utiliza o sobrenatural sempre que está em dificuldades ou sempre que as soluções se configurem como difíceis, uma vez que ele não separa o sobrenatural do natural, mas antes os vê num processo de intercomplementação”.

## The *Missa Caiçara* debut and recording

Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara* was first presented in the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 1996. It took place in the *Santuário Nossa Senhora de Fátima* (Our Lady of Fatima's Sanctuary), during the *II Festival de Música Sacra* (II Sacred Music Festival) realized in the city of São Paulo. The *Paulistano* choir was conducted by Samuel Kerr, having as soloist singers Silvia Tessuto, Graziela Sanches, Rosemeire Moreira, Magda Paino, Nelson Campacci and Jean Szot. On the *violas caipiras* there were Gualtieri Beloni and Fernando Deghi, who created an introduction made by the violas for the debut. No member of the São Paulo coastline communities took part in that performance. The Radio Cultura FM of São Paulo recorded and produced a CD, which was used as audio reference in this article.

Why did not the fishermen's community participate in the mass presentation? Kilza explained that, although she tried not to adopt a complex structure and musical language, the local musicians found it difficult to realize the interpretation. The instrumental parts were easy for them, but the same could not be said about the vocal ones. In addition, operational problems and practical reasons related to the rehearsals revealed it would be easier to have the performance made by professional musicians, residents in São Paulo (SETTI, *apud* DEGHI, 2001, *passim*). After some attempts in 1990 the score was abandoned, until the opportunity of being debuted in the *II Festival de Música Sacra*.



Figure 14 – Catalog of the II Festival de Música Sacra.  
Source: Kilza Setti's personal archive.



Figure 15 – Interior part of the catalog shows Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara*.  
Source: Kilza Setti's personal archive.

## Final considerations

This article brought some objective and subjective aspects of Kilza Setti's mass to show the composer's interest not only in sharing the information she acquired in her Ethnomusicologist studies among the coastline communities of São Paulo, but also in perpetuating it through the invention of a beautiful musical *oeuvre*. In *Missa Caiçara*, Kilza expressed her feelings about different issues, beginning with the respect for some traditional musical forms like the mass, passing by the admiration for other cultures sometimes underestimated in the academic music field, as the *Caiçara*, and ending by a discussion about the women's situation in some peripheral zones, such as the São Paulo's coastline. She manages to do it with excellence and to call attention to some instruments like the *viola caipira*, hardly used in the classical music repertoire.

Despite the complexity, creativity and information contained in the Kilza Setti's *Missa Caiçara*, the *oeuvre* had just two performances realized and one recording made publicly available. Unfortunately, it is a common data regarding women composers' production in this field.

Therefore, this article intends to give Kilza Setti and other women's music more visibility, not only in the Brazilian territory but also abroad.

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## Author Data

Eliana Monteiro da Silva is a pianist, professor and music researcher. Her studies address the musical production of women composers, which she also makes available through concerts and recordings. She is author of the book "*Clara Schumann: compositora x mulher de compositor*" (Clara Schumann: Composer x composer's wife), published in 2011, and of the CD "*Clara Schumann - lieder e piano solo*", recorded in 2012. PhD in Music, she develops a postdoctoral work at the University of São Paulo, focusing on the Latin American women composers' music. She is one of the founder members of Sonora ([www.sonora.me](http://www.sonora.me)) and Polymnia ([www.polymnia.webnode.com](http://www.polymnia.webnode.com)) groups, both related to women composers' issues. Since 2010 she keeps the *Duo Ouvir Estrelas* with the singer Clarissa Cabral, which was responsible for the first Brazilian recordings of some Clara Schumann's songs.

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