

■ Chiquinha Gonzaga

Chiquinha Gonzaga (1847–1935) was born and lived in Rio de Janeiro, which is one of the biggest cities in the South American country of Brazil. Her full name was really Francisca Edwiges Neves Gonzaga, but people throughout Brazil call her by the affectionate nickname “Chiquinha.” She was an important and beloved composer, pianist, and conductor in that country. Gonzaga received a very good education, including in music, and she wrote her first piece of music at age 11.

Gonzaga married a businessman chosen by her family when she was sixteen. But their marriage was not happy, and her husband did not want Gonzaga to

have a musical career. She left her husband and asked for a divorce. This was a great scandal at the time, and so her family rejected her. She married a second time, but again divorced, and so she had to make money and support herself and her children. Gonzaga was able to work as a piano teacher and a performer to make money, and eventually became successful as a composer. She wrote over 2,000 pieces throughout her lifetime, including the music for 77 musical plays. In 1885, she also became the first woman in Brazil to conduct an orchestra.

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