Balthasar de Freitas was a musician who lived in the city of Jaraguá, state of Goiás, Brazil. He was born in 1870 and died in 1936, leaving one of the most important collections of music manuscripts from the state of Goiás. Freitas was a composer and copyist himself, and also the heir of the collection that now has his name and which was formed also by musicians from preceding generations. The collection contains more than 500 items, divided into four sub-collections: (1) sacred music; (2) instrumental music; (3) printed music; and (4) other documents. The music manuscripts are mostly from late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the repertory which they preserve goes back to the eighteenth century.

The present dissertation studies the sacred music works of Balthasar de Freitas’s collection. A thematic catalogue forms the second volume, presenting 164 pieces which are part of the sacred music sub-collection; an analysis of the groups of pieces according to their liturgical/paraliturgical function is also provided. The research describes the cultural background in which the collection was formed, giving an overview of sacred music in Goiás during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with emphasis on the role played by brotherhoods in the state, as well as the exchanges between musicians from Goiás and from other parts of Brazil.

Finally, the dissertation presents a discussion of style, performance practices, and reception of sacred music during the nineteenth century. Copyists who produced the manuscripts found in the collection were responsible for adapting the old repertory to the circumstances available to them. Among other things, they replaced strings for winds and started performing several pieces one tone lower.