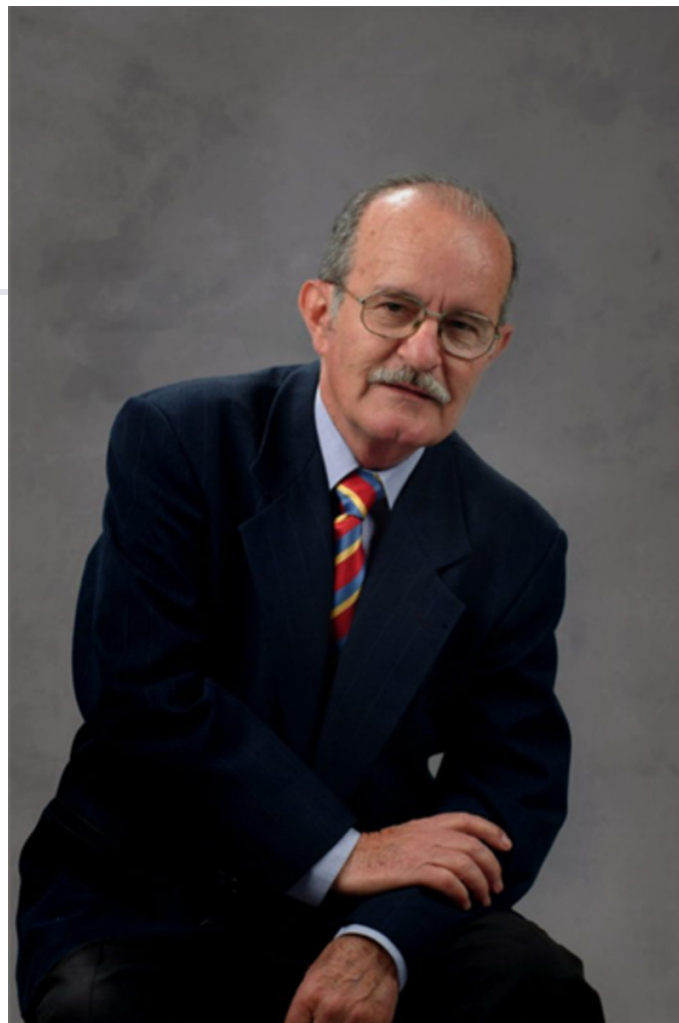


Azevedo, Elias Reis de (1933–2021)

THE BRAZILIAN WHITE CENTER – UNASP

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Elias Azevedo

Photo courtesy of UNASP São Paulo Memory Center.

Elias Reis de Azevedo was a pastor, musician, composer, and Adventist music producer from Brazil.

Early Years (1933-1958)

Elias Reis de Azevedo was born August 28, 1933, in the city of Rolante, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. His father was Alcindo Rodrigues de Azevedo, who worked as a teacher, boy's dean, and director of Adventist institutions, and his mother was Dorvina Prates dos Reis Azevedo.¹ His siblings were Oswaldo Reis Azevedo, Iria da Cruz, and Eliete Gorski Damaceno.²

From a young age, Adventism had a deep influence within his life as he got in touch with Bible teachings from his parents, who were both Adventists. José Amador dos Reis, the first ordained Adventist pastor in Brazil, was “the brother of Elias’ grandmother by [his] father’s side.”⁸ Elias’ dedication to music began in childhood. At the age of four he already sang in church with his father and, whenever he could, he participated in the worship services.⁴ He started studying at seven years of age, in 1941, at the Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy primary school in the city of Taquara, Rio Grande do Sul, where his aunt Dorvalina P. dos Reis was his first teacher.⁵ He attended middle school at Paraná Adventist Academy. There Elias decided to confirm his decision with Christ. He was baptized September 1, 1945, by Pastor Renato Emir Oberg, at the school dam. Later, he returned to the Cruzeiro do Sul Adventist Academy, where, in 1952, he finished secondary education.⁶ Before continuing his studies, he canvassed in the southern region of Brazil, in 1953 and 1954. Then he went to Brazil College (present-day Brazil Adventist University) in São Paulo, and attended the technical high school course in Accounting, graduating in 1958.⁷

Life and Ministry (1958-2021)

In 1959, Elias started studying for a B.A. in Theology at Brazil College. While still a student, he produced the compilation album *Louvores do Coração (Praises from the Heart)*, published by the Brazilian Publishing House in 1960, in four volumes, including arrangements for solos, duets, trios, and quartets. This material met the needs of Adventist musicians and singers, who until then had no such resources.⁸ Elias had a real appreciation for sacred music. While at Brazil College, he served as a singing teacher for the male choir at the Faculty of Theology.⁹ He sang as a tenor in the Carlos Gomes Choir, at the time conducted by the maestro Flávio Araújo Garcia. He joined the Harmonia quartet, created in 1952 by maestro Charles Pierce. It was the first official quartet of the school’s musical conservatory.¹⁰

Harmonia participated in numerous Adventist public evangelism series, in many Brazilian states. They held concerts in Adventist and evangelical churches, theaters, cinemas, and other venues, and for radio stations and television programs.¹¹ Elias traveled widely with the group.¹² As a second tenor, he sang by the side of Ruben Dias, first tenor, José Alfredo Torres Pereira, baritone, and Rodolpho Gorski, bass. By their side, he was part of evangelizing mission in various cities of São Paulo state and in other states in the Southern and Southeastern Regions of Brazil.¹³

On February 14, 1961, before graduating, he married Zilda Marlene de Azevedo, whom he had met at Brazil College.¹⁴ The marriage ceremony was held by Pastor Siegfried Kümpel, at the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Santo André city, state of São Paulo.¹⁵ Zilda was born in Serrana, São Paulo, on February 2, 1941. She was a loyal companion to her husband, also sharing an interest in music, and made a significant contribution to the Adventist Church. After completing her studies at Brazil College, she helped many people by offering training for children Sabbath School teachers around Brazil, the United States, Canada, and Portugal. She also contributed

to musical and audiovisual productions.¹⁶

Elias graduated with a Theology degree in 1962, and he almost graduated with a degree in Music in the city of São Paulo. Before his graduation, he compiled and arranged a hymnal for canvassers titled *Mensageiros do Senhor* (*Messengers of the Lord*), released by the Brazilian Publishing House in 1962. It was comprised of 21 hymns, the majority Portuguese-translated versions of English hymns, prepared by Joel Sarli.¹⁷ On February 23, 1963, Elias was blessed with the birth of his son Wilson.¹⁸

Elias participated in the initial production of the Arautos do Rei (Brazilian King's Herald's) quartet discs, and in the production and distribution of the Brazilian "Voice of Prophecy" program recordings, and later worked for 14 years on the discs' industrialization with radio programs, being responsible for the distribution of recordings to more than 300 radio stations in Brazil.¹⁹

However, his initiatives and musical participation went beyond the denominational scope. He was recognized as a pioneer in music production and dissemination in the Brazilian evangelical community. As owner and director of Gravadora Boa Música (Good Music Records), Elias recorded the first evangelical trios and duets in Brazil and, "by Zilda Azevedo's side, he composed, produced and sang songs that were recorded by GBM."²⁰ He also produced the first postcards and bookmarks with biblical thoughts in Brazil, that had a great acceptance with the public.²¹

Elias Azevedo also had relevant contribution in the sociocultural context. In 1973 he won first place in a contest for his production of the album *O Guarda Amigo* (*The Friendly Guard*), in partnership with the Brazilian Publishing House. This production was meant to teach children about car traffic, and was presented at the first National Transit Symposium, held at the Brazilian Federal Senate. Due to this achievement, Major Geraldo Menezes, an employee of the São Paulo State Department of Public Transportation, stated that "this was an exemplary contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and I recommend this material to all the drivers training schools in the country!"²²

Last Years

Elias Azevedo is remembered for being a husband and father who balanced his ministry with the loving care of the family. However, death separated him from his wife Zilda de Azevedo, who died March 8, 2000, and was buried in the Peace Cemetery in São Paulo city. He lived his retirement years in the city of São Paulo in a house near Brazil Adventist University, and was active as a church elder in the college church for more than 30 years. He spent his days at the college talking to employees and students, and loved to tell stories and give a flower to someone to brighten their day. When having meals at the college cafeteria, he always seized the opportunity to counsel and encourage students. Elias Reis de Azevedo died of cancer March 15, 2021, at his home in São Paulo. He left his son Wilson and two grandchildren.²³

Contribution

Elias Reis de Azevedo is remembered by the Adventist Church in Brazil as a dedicated pastor, musician, music producer, and composer who contributed to gospel preaching in the country through sacred music. He is also remembered as the owner of Gravadora Boa Música, which provided quality music to the Adventist Brazilian community for over 50 years.²⁴

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NOTES

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3. Elias Reis de Azevedo and José A. Torres Pereira, *Sons de uma vida: A história de um pioneiro da Música* (São Paulo, SP: GBM, 2010), 13.

4. *Ibid.*, 17.

5. Elias Reis de Azevedo e José A. Torres Pereira, *Sons de uma vida: A história de um pioneiro da Música* (São Paulo, SP: GBM, 2010), 13-15.

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14. *Ibid.*, 27-30.
15. *Ibid.*, 31-32.
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18. Elias Reis de Azevedo, interviewed by Ivo Ribeiro de Carvalho, Ellen G. White Research Center, Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, March 8, 2017.
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22. *Ibid.*, 45-46, 86.

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