

## HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS: A SURVEY OF HIS GUITAR MUSIC

[Orlando Fraga](#)

### I. Early Life

*"I consider my works as letters I've written to posterity without expecting answer." H. Villa-Lobos*

"Since my youth, I was introduced to musical life through the hands of my father who gave me a little violoncello. My father, besides being a man of deep culture and uncommon intelligence, was a practical musician with perfect skill. With him, I always went to rehearsals, concerts and operas, in order to get used to instrumental ensemble. I also learned to play the clarinet and was demanded to discern about the genre, style, character and origin of the music I was listening to, as well as saying promptly the note's name of sounds or noises that appeared incidentally at every moment like, for instance, the creak of a truck's wheel, the bird's singing, a metal object fallen down, etc. Poor of mine if I didn't guess it right."

Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the century was far from the metropolis it is today. The Brazilian capital then was characterized by a strong European influence. Even in the daily life, it was full of music. Streets, and bars, and anywhere people could be invaded by the **CHORÕES** [\(1\)](#) fulfilling the evenings with their serenades. Groups of young men would form instrumental bands, playing at parties, balls, weddings, carnival, and all kind of celebrations, continuing to play throughout the night on the streets after the close of the meeting places, some times just wandering through the empty lanes with short interruptions at the nearest bar for a stimulating drink. Different groups would meet on the winding streets and challenge each other to musical competition, which eventually could end up in fight. The musicians could walk miles throughout the night, singing and playing just for pleasure.

Heitor Villa-Lobos was born there on March 5, 1887 [\(2\)](#). His training was that of a self-taught opposed to academic instruction. He had his first lessons from his father, Raul, who worked at the National Library, in Rio de Janeiro, and was a good amateur musician. Raul Villa-Lobos taught his son, from very early age, to play the cello, using at first a

viola for the purpose. The cello was to remain Heitor's instrument, that one he studied seriously, besides the guitar which he was self-introduced in the Rio's streets and, later developed his skills at a great level studying the most important composers available in the guitar's literature at the beginning of the century. Villa-Lobos attachment to both instruments brought him later numerous works of striking instrumentation. On his father's death in 1899, Villa-Lobos' mother, who had several other children, dedicated herself to their education. Villa-Lobos was an inconstant young, preferring to share the bohemian life of the city's popular musicians rather than to pay attention to the medical studies he was intending. It was with these popular musicians that he was able to practice the art of improvising guitar accompaniment to the capriciously modulating melodic lines of the **CHORO** (3). While taking guitar lessons from a neighbor, he had to keep it hidden from his mother, although it was not a reason to refrain his imagination. The starting point was **Mazurka in D** (1899) and **Panqueca** (1900). His father left a valuable library and Villa-Lobos found out that some of the precious books could be sold to bookstores for considerable amount. Thereafter, the good relations with popular singer and players expanded, thanks to drinks financed at appropriate time by the composer-to-be.

As Villa-Lobos grew up, he became a member of the group directed by Quincas Laranjeiras (4) who traditionally organized meetings at Carioca street. The young Villa-Lobos played the guitar and the influences of those times are perceived in the first Brazilian Bachiana, whose fugue was composed very much in the style of Satiro Bilhar, another popular player. A new set of guitar music came out soon after: **Valsa Brilhante** (Bright Waltz, 1904), **Fantasia** (Fantasy, 1909) **Canção Brasileira** (Brazilian Song, 1910), **Dobrado Pitoresco** (1910), **Quadrilha** (1910), **Tarantela** (1910), **Simple** (Simple, 1911) (5) and **Oito Dobrados** (Eight Dobrados, 1909-12) (6). However, his first important work then is the **Suite Popular Brasileira** (Brazilian Popular Suite, 1908-12) (7) published later in Paris by Max Eishg.

## II. Knowing Brazil

In spite of his almost poor way of living, Villa-Lobos undertook an extra effort to finish his academic education at São Bento School, but after a few months of class he gave up. Between the age of 18 and 25 he journeyed throughout Brazil. To make more funds he sold the rest of the fine books his father had left to finance the first trip to the Northeast of Brazil and studied the music of popular singers *in loco*, their style of interpretation and their instruments. In a self-invented shorthand he recorded tunes and melodies, desafios (8) and autos (9) and dramatic dances eventually collecting over one thousand musical

themes and rhythms. This vast material would be the main source for his first works after returning to Rio. However, soon after Villa-Lobos set out for a new journey, this time toward the Southern Region where he worked in a match factory in Paranaguá, Paraná, to make money. As far as his music was concerned, his stay was disappointing. This section of the country is heavily infiltrated by European immigrants and so close to Argentina and Uruguay border that the folk music he could collect there was hardly original.

Back to Rio de Janeiro in 1907, Villa-Lobos tried, without success, to submit himself to the discipline of the technical instruction in composition. Therefore he registered at the National Institute of Music and took lessons in harmony with Angelo França and composition with Frederico Nascimento, both renowned teachers then. His fiery temperament and exuberant imagination, as well as the creative experience he had already acquired, caused him to leave the classes after a while, although he retained the admiration of his teachers, particularly Francisco Braga (1868-1945), who continued to give him help and advice throughout the early years of his career. He studied d'Indy's composition treatise with great interest, and this provided the guide for his creativity. In addition he read avidly the scores of great masters, from Bach to Chopin, as well the greatest masters of the guitar, such as Fernando Sor (1778-1839), Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841), Matteo Carcassi (1792-1841), and Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829).

The next journey, Villa-Lobos went to the Central Region and then to the Northeast again. In Bahia State he heard Debussy for the first time. The music did not impress him very much and it took Artur Rubinstein, whom Villa-Lobos met some months later, when he was back again to Rio de Janeiro, to reveal all the secrets of that new music. Apparently, Villa-Lobos had not yet studied recent works by Schoenberg and Stravinsky, and so his experiments might be considered spontaneous and original.

A concert at the Jornal do Comercio Hall on November 13, 1915, presented several of Villa-Lobos' early compositions: the **Piano Trio 1**, the **Sonata 2** for violin and piano, the **Waltz Scherzo** for piano solo, a **Berceuse** for cello and piano, and several songs were performed with controversial reception. Further programs followed at a regular intervals and brought the composer to the public attention. In 1917 he wrote the **Sexteto Místico** (Mystic Sextet) [\(10\)](#) which represent his search for a new language. Villa-Lobos was still earning his living as a cello player but turning more and more to composing. The **Chôro 1**, written in 1920, means the beginning of his maturity concerning to guitar music. Also, his popularity grew bigger after the Week of Modern Art [\(11\)](#) although it was the most controversial event of the first-half of

the century in Brazil.

### III. Paris

His gifts were recognized, Villa-Lobos received financial support from both Federal Government and from a group of wealthy people, enabling him to leave for Europe. From 1923 to 1930 he lived in Paris, but undertaking several trips, appearing in Brazil, Buenos Aires and in the main European cities. Soon, he was accepted in the innermost French music circle. There, his success was enormous: concerts of his works given in 1924 and 1927 caused sensation. Among the people he formed close links were Edgard Varése, Florent Schmitt, Pablo Picasso, Fernand Leger, Serge Prokofieff and Leopold Stokowski. In 1924 he was made a professor of composition at the International Conservatory of Music in Paris, where he met Vincent d'Indy, from whom Villa-Lobos took some helpful advises on composition. He also met Andres Segovia (1893-1986), the famous and influent Spanish guitarist, who soon became one of the most important performers of his music. To Segovia, Villa-Lobos wrote a series of **Twelve Studies** (1929). The **Introdução ao Chôro** (Introduction to Choro), for orchestra with guitar, would appear in the same year, the first out of fourteen using a variety of instrumentation.

### IV. Back to Brazil

In 1930 Villa-Lobos returned to Brazil, where, along with architects, painters and other intellectuals, he became one of the most estimated artists of the new strongly nationalist regime, brought by the revolution headed by Getulio Vargas ([12](#)). First he settled in São Paulo, but it was fast becoming a center of political instability. A new government was coming with the militaries and affecting negatively the cultural scenery. Villa-Lobos was disappointed and ready to go back to Europe when, unexpectedly, he was summoned by the new government of São Paulo. They soon reached an agreement and Villa-Lobos dived enthusiastically into his plan for music education. He traveled through the interior of São Paulo state for about two years introducing and supervising his project.

In 1932 he returned to Rio de Janeiro and founded the *SEMA* (Superintendency of Musical and Artistic Education). He was active in many fields of education and even founded an orchestra bearing his name. The educational activities of *SEMA* went on intensively until the creation of the National Conservatory for Orpheonic Singing on November 26, 1942, under his responsibility. To these activities he spent great enthusiasm, developing a bold although coherent program of initial instruction in the primary and technical school, higher

training, concert organization and the safeguarding of popular traditions. Meanwhile, some other guitar works were written: **Distribuição das Flores** ( Distribution of Flowers, 1937), the **Aria das Bachianas Brasileiras 5** (Aria from the Brazilian Bachianas, 1938) and **Seis Preludios** (Six Preludes, 1940).

During that period Villa-Lobos left Brazil only for short trips to conduct in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile and to take part in the International Congress for Music Education at Prague (1936), and occasionally visiting Vienna. In 1944 he made a first journey to United States, where he returned frequently and where he established a solid reputation; during that first visit he conducted the Jensen Symphonic Orchestra of Los Angeles in a program of his works, and in 1945 he gave concerts in Boston, New York and Chicago. With the end of World War II he was able to return to Paris, being elected a corresponding member of the Institute of France, replacing Manuel de Falla.

On his return Villa-Lobos founded in Rio de Janeiro the Brazilian Academy of Music, of which he was president until his death. As his health was getting worse, he went to New York and spent some months of treatment at Memorial Hospital. He traveled constantly after that, going every year to United States and France, always conducting and composing. The **Canção do Poeta do Século 18** (18th Century Poet Melody, 1953), the **Concerto para Violão e Pequena Orquestra** (Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra, 1951) and the [?].

Green Mansions (for Soprano and Orchestra with guitar, 1958) were his last works for guitar. He died in November 17, 1959, in Rio de Janeiro at the age of 72.

## V. Villa-Lobos' Guitar Music

Heitor Villa-Lobos played and composed for the guitar many years before first meeting Andres Segovia, to whom his most important works are dedicated. Some of his guitar works were lost or remain unpublished. The Villa-Lobos Museum lists the following guitar compositions:

YEAR	WORK	MOVEMENT
1899	Mazurka in D	
1900	Panqueca	
1904	Valsa Concerto #2	
1908-12	Brazilian Popular Suite	- Mazurka-Choro
		- Schottish-Choro
		- Valse-Choro

		Valsa Choro
		- Gavotta-Choro
		- Chorinho
1910	Brazilian Song	
1910	Dobrado Pitoresco	
1910	Quadrilha	
1910	Tarantela	
1911	Mazurka Simples	
1917	Mystic Sextet	
1920	Choro #1	
1925	Modinha	
1929	Twelve Studies	
1929	Introduction to Choros	
1937	Distribution of Flowers	
1938	Aria from Bachiana Five	
1940	Six Preludes	
1943	18th Century Poet Melody	
1951	Guitar Concerto	
1958	Green Mansions	

This list, though only a small part of Villa-Lobos' amazing output of over two thousand compositions, is reduced by the fact that only a few of these items remain unpublished. His immense reputation in the guitar world rests evenly on a remarkably limited number of works.

Follows a description of each composition by chronological order as they were written:

### **V.i Mazurka in D**

There are divergences about which music Villa-Lobos wrote first: Mazurka in D or Panqueca. Villa-Lobos himself was confused but he said that whatever he made first, it was just his first musical work. The manuscript is lost.

### **V.ii Panqueca**

Manuscript lost.

### **V.iii Valsa Concerto**

This waltz, which bears the subtitle Bright Waltz, was repeatedly played by the great Spanish performer Miguel Llobet (1878-1936). The manuscript is lost.

#### **V.iv Brazilian Popular Suite**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1924)

Mazurka-Choro · Schottish-Choro · Valsa-Choro · Gavotte-Choro · Chorinho

The title of this Suite is controversial (see note 7). Its five sections are build up second the urban traditions of the Choro played in Rio de Janeiro early this century. Indeed, the Chorinho was created later in 1923 during Villa-Lobos first stay in Paris. The pieces are quite simple and do not bring any special or important innovation. The innermost feeling of the Gavotta, Valsa, Schottish and Mazurka is just the reflection of the character of the music then, a mixture of Brazilian and European music, being some times nostalgic, some times gracious.

#### **V.v Fantasia**

The manuscript is lost.

#### **V.vi Eight Dobrados**

Paraguaio · Brasil · Chorar · Saudade · Paranaguá · Cabeçudo · Rio de Janeiro · Padre Pedro

*Dobrado* (literally, doubled) is the most popular musical genre in the South Region and is heard in neighbor countries, like Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina. They are the result of Villa-Lobos' first adventures in this region, as *Paraguaio* means from Paraguay and *Paranaguá* is a harbor on the South Atlantic, in Paraná State. The remain titles express feelengs as *Chorar* stands for Crying, *Saudade* as Missing, and *Cabeçudo* stands for Stubborn. The manuscripts are lost. The first two were reductions from those written for Band in 1904.

#### **V.vii Brazilian Song, Dobrado Pitoresco, Quadrilha and Tarantela**

Manuscripts are lost.

#### **V.viii Simples (Mazurka)**

The manuscript, recently discovered, is dedicated to Eduardo Luiz Gomes, a Villa-Lobos' guitar student. It was written in August 12, 1911 and bears the following inscription: 'This is a study; I don't consider it

as serious music'.

## **V.ix Mystic Sextet**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1923)

The Mystic Sextet comes from a time when the composer was trying a new language and avoiding to the maximum the common place. Villa-Lobos then did not know the experiences bearing by the Viennese. Nevertheless his works were treated with uncommon and audacious harmonies. Its instrumentation, too, is quite interesting: guitar, flute, saxophone, clarinet, harp and cello are divided in three movements without interruption among them.

In the first movement - *Allegro non Troppo* - the guitar is source of the musical material. Modal motives are introduced by the flute, oboe and saxophone. The instrumental disposition is clear: three melodic instruments against three harmonic instruments.

The *Adagio* that follows presents a quite exotic melody in the oboe. The long notes on the downbeat are very expressive dissonances (seventh major, fourth augmented and fifth augmented), which forms its distinct character.

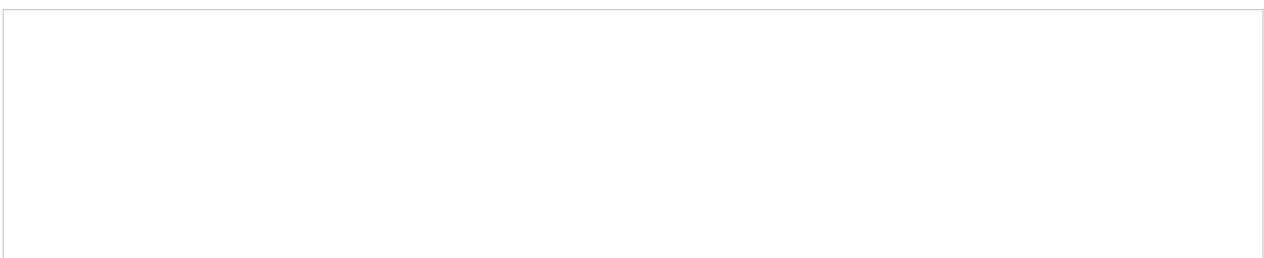
The last *Quasi Allegro* shows an abundant use of parallel fourths and perfect chords in chromatic movement and augmented chords, as well.

The Mystic Sextet was first performed on January 12, 1963, in Rio de Janeiro, with Turibio Santos on the guitar.

## **V.x Choro 1**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1923)

The **Choro 1** was written in 1920 and is the first of fourteen. This is a stylized version of the original genre of Choro, which sets in its forefront the amusing character that defines the style, using fermatas and unexpected accelerandos.





Harmonically, the **Choro 1** follows strictly the popular pattern: first section in E minor, second section G major and the third again in E minor.

## **V.xi Modinha**

The **Modinha** (Little Mode) is the fifth within Fourteen Serenades written in 1925, in Paris. For request of Olga Prager Coelho, a famous soprano then, it was reduced for voice and guitar from the original for voice and piano. Villa-Lobos had set it as a triptych, as follow: a) Senzalas (from Brazilian Typical Songs), b) Xango (Ibid.) and c) Carreiro's Song (from the Eighth Serenade). Manuel Bandeira, the famous poet, wrote the lyrics.

The manuscript remains unpublished.

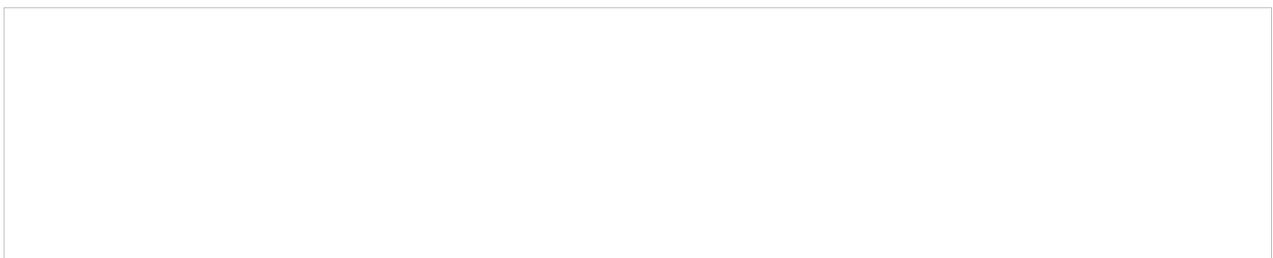
## **V.xii Twelve Studies**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1953)

Although this collection had been composed between 1924 and 1929, some of its ideas and global setting were sketched much earlier by the composer. In a sense, some devices are quite close to the popular accompaniment (Studies 4 and 6). Others are closer to classical formulas from the last century, as in Carcassi, Carulli and Aguado (Studies 2, 3 and 9). It was only in 1953 that the Twelve Studies were published by Max Eschig Editions, Paris and it bears a dedication to the Spanish virtuoso Andres Segovia, who wrote the foreword.

### **Study 1 (E minor ; Allegro)**

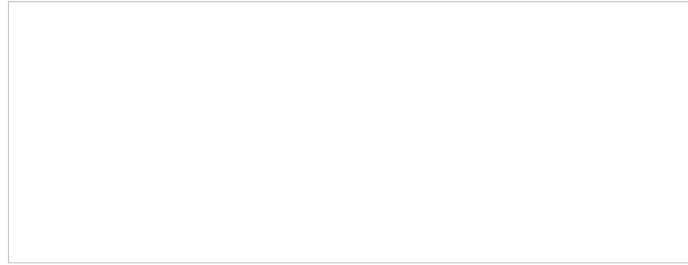
Study of continuous arpeggio, which means the right hand remains steady, doing the same movements while the left hand explores the fingerboard.



### **Study 2 (A major ; Allegro)**

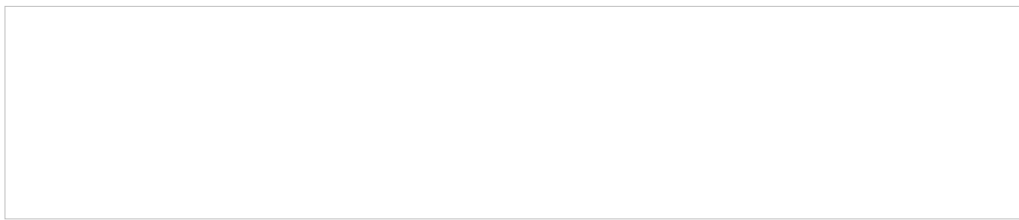
Study of broken chords and slur. This kind of device was very common in last century, being used mostly by Dionisio Aguado, Ferdinando Carulli and Matteo Carcassi, composers deeply studied by Villa-Lobos on the earlier times. At the end of this study there is a quite interesting

effect made for both hands.



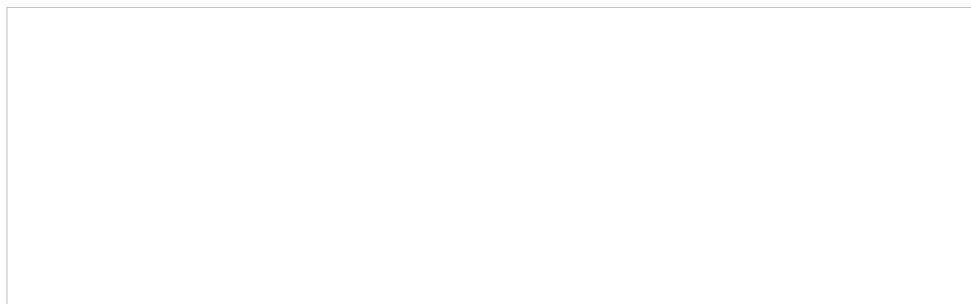
### **Study 3 (D major ; Allegro Moderato)**

Study of slur. Here, too, we see a very strong influence from the last century guitar music. The number three is listed among those of higher level of difficulty.



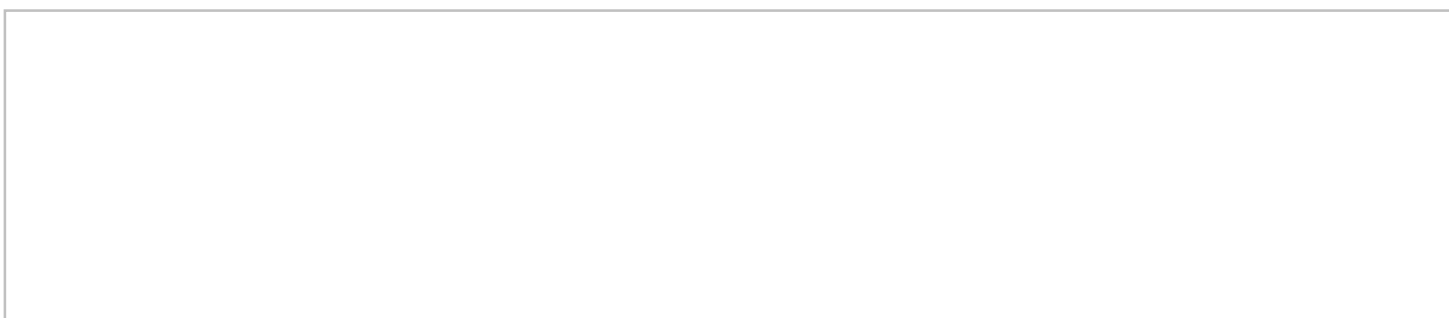
### **Study 4 (G major; Poco Moderato)**

Study of repeated four-voice chords, in which Villa-Lobos explores the rather harmonic richness of the guitar going through interesting cadences and modulations without preparation.



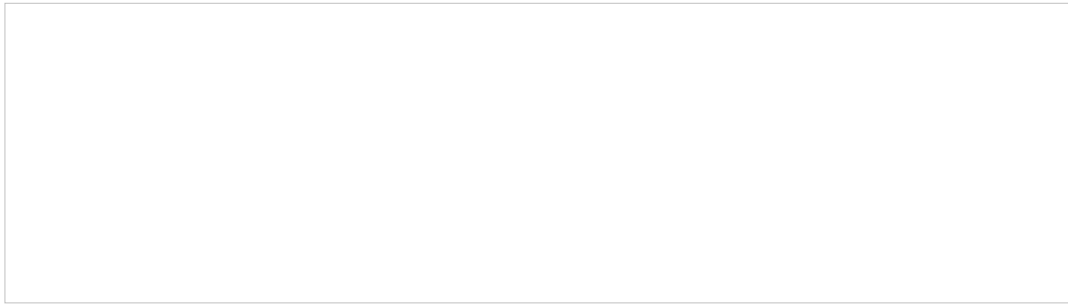
### **Study 5 (C major; Andantino)**

Study of counterpoint. Its introduction is a pedal in thirds soon followed by a modal melody that reminds the viola caipira [\(13\)](#), i.e., with a deep melancholy.



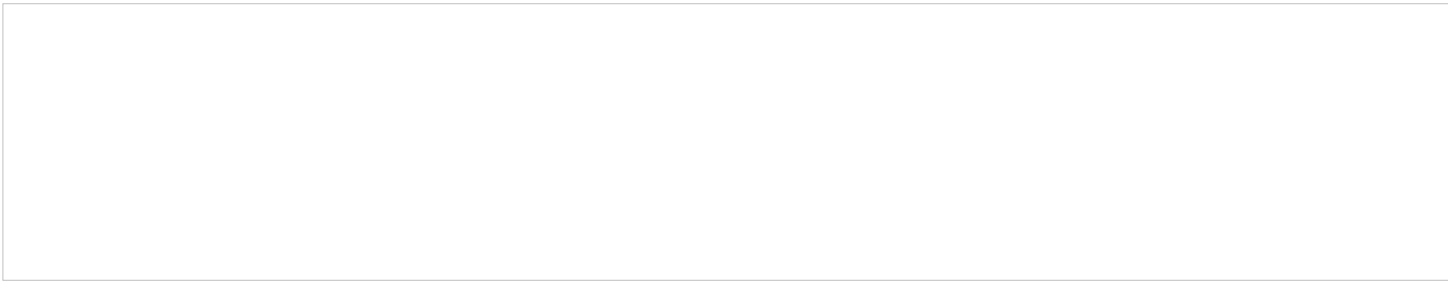
### **Study 6 (E minor; Poco allegro)**

Another study of chords. It is quite clear the influence of the Argentinean tango on its harmonies.



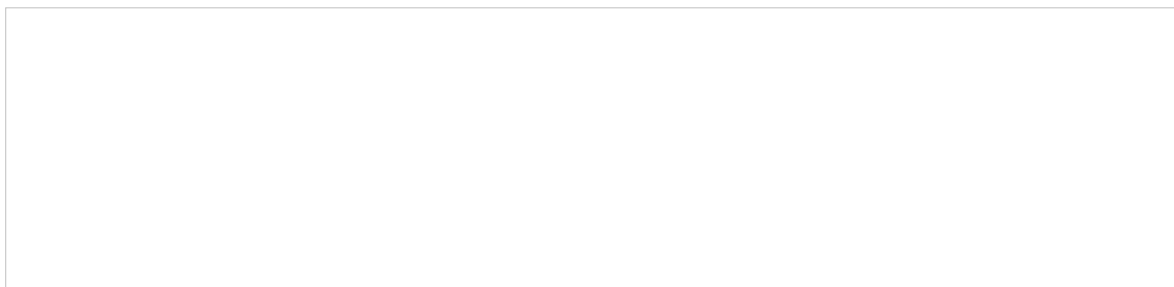
### **Study 7 (E minor ; Anime)**

This study is listed among those of the highest level of virtuosity. The initial scale causes a sort of tension as it goes through to the central section in arpeggio. Here a sweet melody, full of Brazilian lyricism, appears on the first string ending up with the re-exposition of the scales, but now configured with quite strong rhythmical elements.



### **Study 8 (C sharp minor ; Moderato)**

Study of arpeggio and slur. The first phrase appears on the bass, as it imitates a cello. The central section brings the same melody on the soprano, which is supported by an arpeggio on the middle strings.



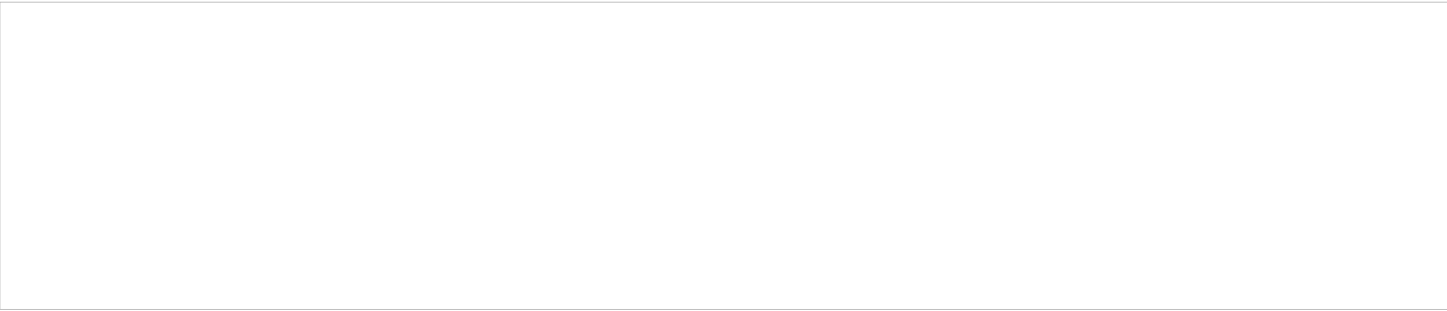
### **Study 9 (F sharp minor ; Tres peu animé)**

Study of chords, slur and arpeggio. Its monotony reminds the very inner life of the countryside, like the Study 5.



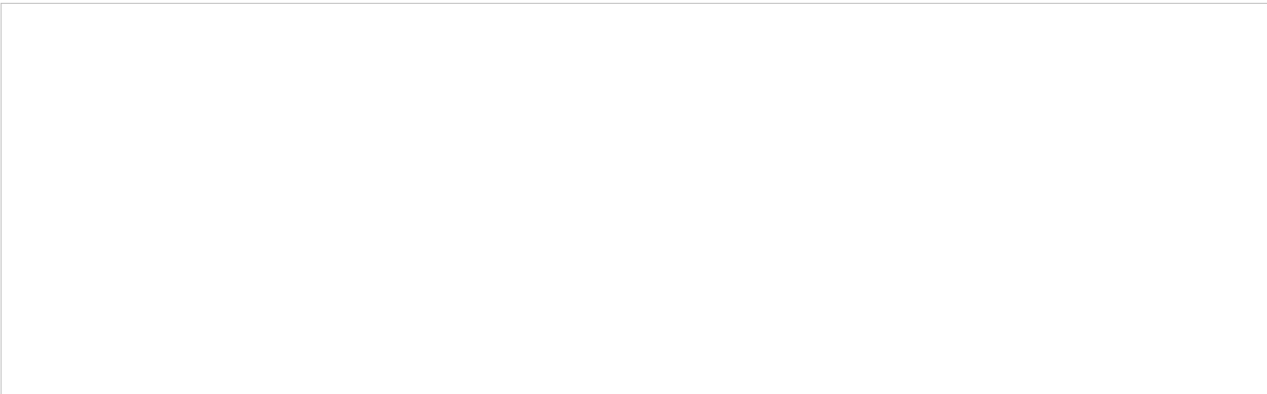
### **Study 10 (B minor ; Vivo)**

Like the numbers 2, 3, 7 and 12, the number 10 demands a higher technical level of virtuosity, mostly in the middle section , when a pedal on the soprano supports a melody on the bass. At the end it is produced a big crescendo based on African rhythms.



### **Study 11 (E minor ; Lento- Piu mosso- Animato- Lento)**

Like the Study 8, here, too, the first phrase appears on the bass, imitating the cello. There is a big contrast between the Brazilian singing and the slightly impressionist ornamentation that imitates a harp. The middle section shows a 'campanella' effect using, some times, up to five 'Es' on five different strings.



### **Study 12 (A minor ; Animato)**

The Study 12 is based on parallel chords. Villa-Lobos has used the natural resources of the guitar, when the left hand keeps steady while jumping up and down on the fingerboard. This is one of the most revolutionary works Villa-Lobos has ever written. Like others Studies, the number 12 has a middle section quite contrasting with a melody on the fifth string with a pedal on the sixth string.

### **V.xiii Introduction to Choros**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1953)

After the **Choros 1**, Villa-Lobos felt the desire of expanding it. The result is a series of fourteen Choros. The **Introduction to Choros** was written in 1929, the same year as the **Twelve Studies**, in Paris, and it is configured for grand orchestra with guitar. Formally, it is an Overture that uses materials taken from the Choros 3, 6, 9, 10 and 12. Close to the end there is a cadence *ad libitum* which prepares the entrance of the Choros 1. The same material was used later in the Fourth Prelude.

### **V.xiv Distribuição das Flores**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1958)

This work, for female choir, flute and guitar, was premiered in December 1937. There's no time signature and the flute sounds as improvising on a modal scale. The guitar explores effects, such as tambora and natural harmonics. There is not any pretension in this work, as it was written for an academic festivity.

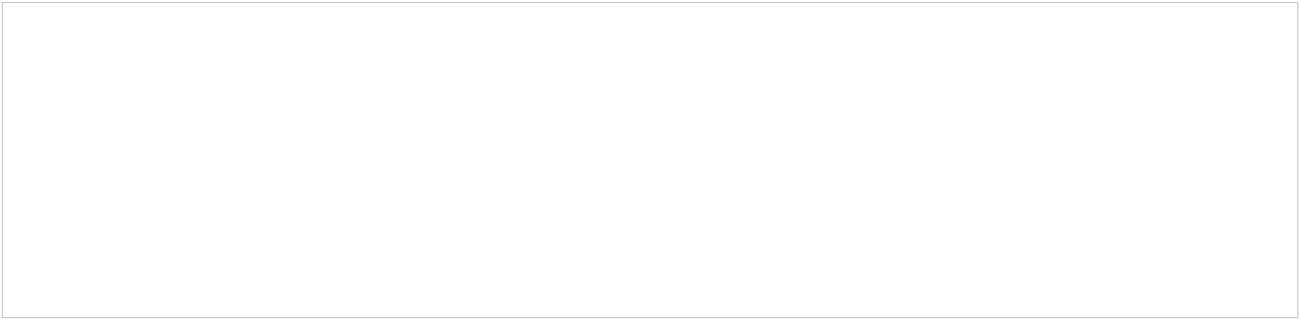
### **V.xv Aria from Brazilian Bachianas 5**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1956)

The **Brazilian Bachianas 5** was originally composed for voice and eight cellos, and transposed for voice and guitar by the composer himself, attending a request of Olga Prager Coelho, important soprano and guitarist at that time. The Brazilian Bachianas 5 was written in two different periods. The first movement (*Cantilena*) was concluded in 1938, with words by Ruth Valadares Correa. Villa-Lobos, at first, thought it was enough. It was only in 1945 Villa-Lobos added another

part, called *Martelo* (Hammer), with words by Manuel Bandeira.

The guitar and J.S. Bach were the Villa-Lobos biggest passions. So, in the *Cantilena*, he tried to make a fusion between the Bach's harmonic and melodic style and the rhythm of Brazilian samba.



## **V.xvi Five Preludes**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschinhg. 1952)

The Preludes written by Villa-Lobos were given a partial debut in Montevideo in 1943 when Abel Carlevaro, an Uruguayan guitarist, played the first performance of numbers 3 and 4. As a whole, the Preludes reveals a structural dilemma which might or might not have been smoothed away if the missing sixth Prelude was ever found. Played as a set, the A/B/A form in numbers one, two, and four (number three is A/B/A/B and number five is A/B/C/A), and the restricted deployment of keys, tends to suffocate the spontaneity. A further problem is that the Preludes appear technically easy, which conducts players into a dangerous territory. In many times Villa-Lobos expressed a special affection about the Preludes. Firstly, it is dedicated to '*Mindinha*' (Arminda Villa-Lobos, the composer's wife), and secondly they embrace a whole set of Brazilian typical music and feeling, as well. So that, they bear a significant subtitle, as we can see below.

### **Prelude 1**

(Lyric Melody or Homage to the Countryman)

The Prelude 1 is one of the most greeted pieces by general audience. The paradoxes of the melody line are the picture of Brazil and its music. Being melancholic, pungent, almost sad it is, at the same time optimist, always crescendo, devilish, as Villa-Lobos used to say. The second section brings a device taken from the viola caipira :

---

## Prelude 2

(Capadocia Melody or Homage to the scoundrel)

Similarly the **Choro 1**, here the melody takes part in the harmony, highlighting the swing of the original Brazilian choro. Villa-Lobos makes it almost caricatural with the exaggerated rubato at the very beginning. Here, the cadence T-DD-D is the most common of the popular genre. Also, the melody is a simple imitation of the clarinet in a Choro's group, usually going up to down, remaining in the middle part.

---

Another interesting point is in the second section of the Prelude. The fixed arpeggio found here is based on the same rhythm combination which is found in carnival's block in some regions of Brazil.

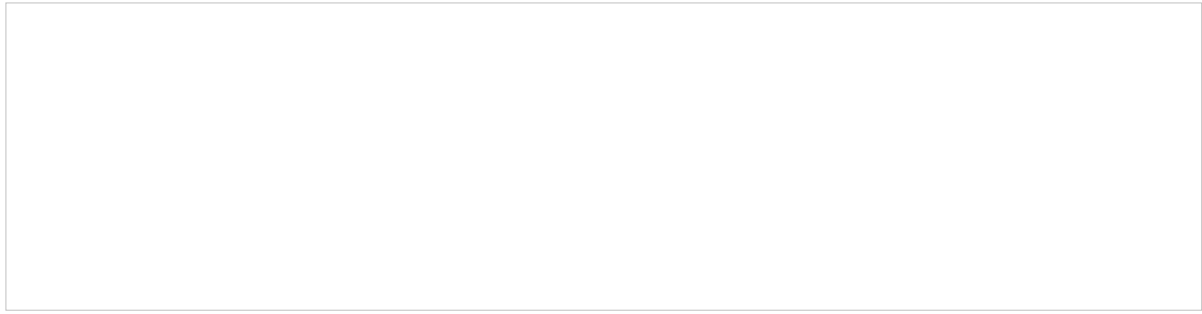
---

## Prelude 3

(Homage to Bach)

It was said before that Bach and the guitar were Villa-Lobos the biggest passions and it can be clearly seen in the two-section Prelude 3. The first one has a vertical structure, including chords and arpeggios. The

second is a descendent melody with a pedal on the soprano, that is a quite Baroque device. So that, it could be seen as a Toccata-like form, which explains the subtitle *'Homage to Bach'*.

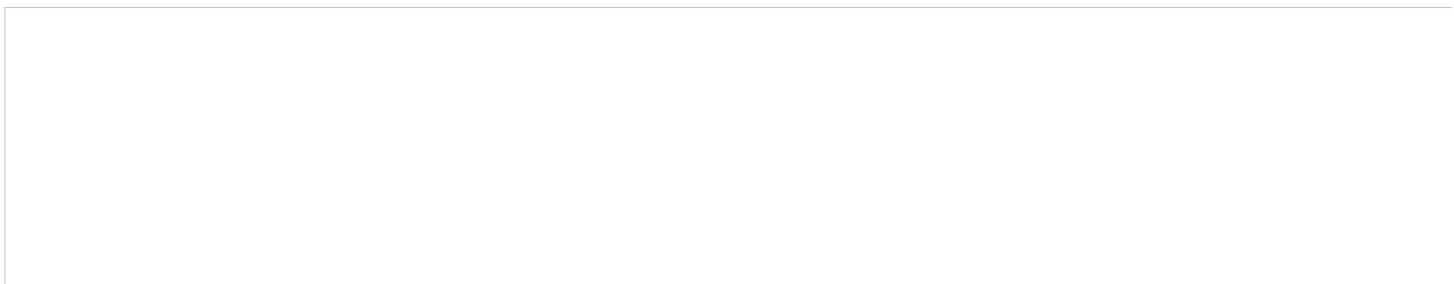


Of course, Villa-Lobos could not foresee the future, but his special sixth sense would anticipate in twenty years the Bossa Nova (New Bossa).

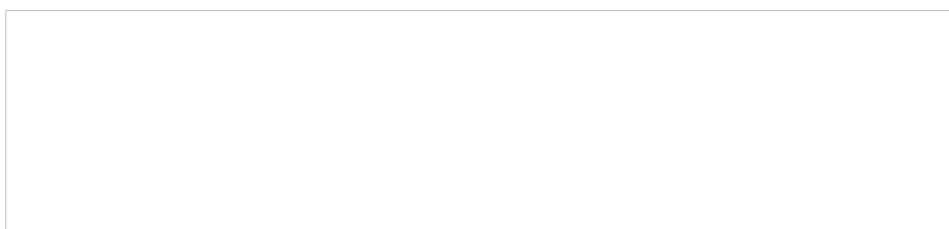
### **Prelude 4**

(Homage to Brazilian Indian)

The richness of Villa-Lobos is based on mixture of musical elements. It was due to the kind of education he received, being opened to every cultural manifestation. He was specially fascinated by the Amazon Forest, its tales and the Indian culture. The main theme, in its simplicity, evokes the Indian.



After a fast arpeggio in the second section, Villa-Lobos re-expose the main theme, but now in harmonics:



### **Prelude 5**

(Homage to Social Life)



One of the most popular rhythm in Brazil then was, indubitably, the waltz. It was played everywhere, every time by everyone. A classical example of a popular one is João Pernambuco's *Rosinha*. Villa-Lobos not only paid attention to it, but also paid a tribute to those musicians writing his waltz. It is not just a Waltz, but a Waltz-Choro.

---

## **V.xvii Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra**

(Paris: ed. Max Eschig, 1955)

The Guitar Concerto was completed in 1951, originally taking shape as a Fantasia Concertante for guitar and small orchestra. Andres Segovia asked Villa-Lobos to add a cadenza between the second and third movements and the piece became a Concerto in the full sense. About the Concerto, Villa-Lobos wrote:

"The Fantasia Concertante was written for guitar and a small and equilibrated orchestra, pursuing timbres that could not annul the soloist's sonority. It was organized in three movements: "Allegro Preciso", Andantino/Andante, and Allegro non Troppo". The first movement ("Allegro Preciso") takes place in the orchestra and shows a theme full of energy, which will reappear in both guitar and orchestra. In the second section ("Poco Meno") the theme is entirely original and bellows to a new episode. It maintains the melodic atmosphere of rather popular songs from the Northeast of Brazil. Following, the first theme is reexposed with the same rhythm structure of the beginning but a third minor above; development and stretto are reduced until the final accelerando. On the "Andantino", after a short introduction by the orchestra (simultaneous scales in divergent movements), the main theme reappears and develops until the "Andante". There, a new episode appears during some measures (6/8), like the introduction, till the expressive melody played by the guitar. The return to the "Andantino" comes a fifth above from the main exposition and the "piu mosso", with a different melody to those of the thematic unity, represents a kind of "Stretto", which concludes the movement. The 'Allegro non Troppo", with a introduction of a few measures (melody and syncope rhythms) shows a orchestral theme which soon reappears by the guitar. Up to the end of the Fantasia many modulations are made with the intention to explore the guitarist's virtuosity."

We can consider the Concerto as a condensation of Villa-Lobos' whole guitar work. The elements previous explored in the Studies and Preludes can be easily found here.

## Just a few words

The handful of Villa-Lobos surviving guitar pieces is small and we would have wished more. In particular a greater assault on those eclectic elements visible elsewhere in his work might have proved fruitful in the context of the instrument. Villa-Lobos, above all other twentieth-century composer for the guitar, possessed the spark of genius capable of realizing how far the instrument could be stretched technically and musically. He said once: 'My teacher? ... Brazil.'

---

---

## Notes

- (1) People who plays Choro (see footnote 4). [\(Back\)](#)
- (2) The biographers have been dated his birth from 1881 to 1981. Villa-Lobos identity papers contain as great variety of birth dates as he has documents. His French cart d'identite bears the year 1891; his former voting paper mentions 1883. Recent searches in Churches and Register Offices have almost surely appointed 1887 as his real birth date. [\(Back\)](#)
- (3) Genre of instrumental popular music much in favor mostly in Rio de Janeiro since the early of the century. [\(Back\)](#)
- (4) Emerite musician at those times. [\(Back\)](#)
- (5) Music written as a lesson to one of his guitar pupils. This waltz was repeatedly played by Miguel Llobet (1878-1938), the famous Spanish performer of the first half of the century. [\(Back\)](#)
- (6) They are: Paraguaio, Brasil, Chorão, Saúdade, Paranaguá, Cabeçudo, Rio de Janeiro and Padre Pedro. [\(Back\)](#)
- (7) Villa-Lobos said once that the name SUITE and the suffix -Chôro were added by the publisher Max Eschig, against his wish. Later his widow, Arminda Villa-Lobos, revealed that it was the composer who did it following the editor suggestion. [\(Back\)](#)
- (8) Literally, challenge. Essentially a poetic duel in which the challenger asks a question or poses a challenge to his adversary that must be answered in the same poetic form; it is popular in various regions in

northeastern Brazil..(D. Appleby, *The Music of Brazil*). ([Back](#))

(9) Spanish or Portuguese dramatic plays of religious or contemplative popular character, popular during the colonial period in Brazil; frequently included incidental music. (Ibid.) ([Back](#))

(10) Guitar, flute, clarinet, saxophone, harp and cellist. Its premiere was in 1963 in Rio de Janeiro, with Turibio Santos on the guitar. ([Back](#))

(11) Also called The Week of 22, it took place in February, 1922, in São Paulo, gathering musicians, painters, actors, poets, lectures and so on. It claimed for a new cultural order, the nationalism. ([Back](#))

(12) Brazilian dictator in 1930-45, and 1951-54. ([Back](#))

(13) Viola Caipira or Country guitar, is a five-double string guitar played in rural area to accompany folk music. ([Back](#))

---

---

### **Bibliographic References**

APPLEBY, D. P. **The Music of Brazil**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

ARETZ, Isabel. **America Latina en Su Musica**. Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1977.

BEHAGUE, Gerard. **Music in Latin America: An Introduction**. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1979.

GUNTHER, Robert. **Die Musikkulturen Lateinamerikas im 19. Jahrhundert**. Germany: 1982.

MURICY, Andrade. **Villa-Lobos: uma interpretação**. Rio de Janeiro: Villa-Lobos Museum, 1960.

SEEGER, Charles. **Music in Latin America: A Brief Survey**. Washington: Pan American Union, 1942.

SLONIMSKY, Nicolas. **Music of Latin America**. New York: Da Capo Press, 1972.

STIMPSON, Michael **The Guitar**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988

TURNBULL, Harvey. **The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day**. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.

WADE, G. **Traditions of the Classical Guitar**. London: John Calder Ltd.,

1980.

---

---

**Orlando Fraga** - Master in Performance by The University of Western Ontario, Canada, and guitar teacher at the School of Music and Fine Arts of Parana. [\(Back\)](#)

Copyright©1996 Electronic Musicological Review, vol. 1.1/September 1996

---

---