



VILLA-LOBOS

DDD
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Piano Music Ciclo Brasileiro • Suíte Floral Chôros Nos. 1, 2 and 5

Sonia Rubinsky



Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

Piano Music, Volume 3

In discussing the legacy of Heitor Villa-Lobos the question of nationalism versus universalism cannot be avoided. In previous volumes of this series, the influence of Brazilian culture on Villa-Lobos's piano works has been addressed from various perspectives, and it is my intention to add to this fundamental feature of his artistic development. Nationalism in the nineteenth century was associated with the political movements of the time. In the early twentieth century, it was invariably linked to a genuine concern in music for ethnographic research and the due preservation of cultural heritage. This view informed major ethnographic projects by Bartók, Kodály, Stravinsky, and Villa-Lobos himself, who in 1905 started a series of research trips throughout Brazil. The manner in which this material was later incorporated into Villa-Lobos's works continues to generate scholarly interest because of the enormous variety of compositional procedures to which this material was subjected. These techniques range from direct quotations to newly invented themes that have an unmistakable folk character, as the composer himself acknowledged. Villa-Lobos conceived of nationalism as distinct from any political implications: "Patriotism in music, and capitalizing upon it, is very dangerous. You will have propaganda instead. But nationalism – the power of the earth, the geographic and ethnographic influences that a composer cannot escape, the musical idioms and sentiment of people and environment – these origins, in my opinion, are indispensable to a vital and genuine art". This genuine nationalism must also be distinguished from the superficially cultural veneer of exoticism. Villa-Lobos, however, sometimes seemed to

capitalize on exoticism. He often remarked, for instance, that the *Dansa do Índio Branco*, the last piece in the suite *Ciclo Brasileiro*, was his musical portrait. In doing so, he opened the door to the folklorisation of his legacy, which can be detected not only in scholarly studies but in performances of his works. Significantly, the Brazilian modernist writer Menotti del Picchia coined the expression "an Indian wearing smoking" to refer to Villa-Lobos, no doubt as a reference to the confluence of regional and cosmopolitan elements as a determinant of his style. Equally significant for an understanding of Villa-Lobos's style is the fact that, throughout his career, he remained fiercely independent from any direct influence. According to him, whenever he felt that another composer's influence was taking root in his works, he would shake himself free from it. This sense of independence was sustained by a lifetime of continuous study and self-discovery, and eventually led him to disdain any critical appreciation of his works, which he considered to be "letters written to posterity and to which he expected no answer". He elaborated further on this notion, when responding to criticism about the difficulty of some of his works: "I do not write in a dissonant style just to be modern. What I write is a direct consequence of my studies, of the synthesis that I have achieved in order to express the particular nature of Brazilian culture. I tested my studies against the heritage of Western music and eventually arrived at a middle ground that represents the individuality of my ideas".

As before in this series, the works recorded in this volume offer a comprehensive sample of the genres and styles found in Villa-Lobos's piano music. The majority

of his compositions for this instrument consist of character pieces, single or organized into suites or collections. They reveal a bewildering variety of formal procedures, but pieces belonging to the same genre often share some structural framework that influences not only the nature of the musical material but also the dimensions of the work.

The *Suíte Floral* is a relatively unknown work, in spite of its great beauty. Written in 1917-18, it belongs to a phase of Villa-Lobos's career in which the influence of French impressionism is at its most prominent. The harmonies and sonorities of *Idílio na Rede* (Idyll in a Hammock) suggest a blend of Debussy and Fauré, with no hint of a Brazilian idiom. The swinging rhythm and leisurely pace are particularly effective in suggesting the indolence of a warm afternoon as one dozes off in a hammock. The second piece, *Uma Camponeza Cantadeira* (A Singing Country Girl), has an interesting quintuplet figure in the left-hand accompaniment suggesting the uncertainty and wonder of the country girl. This device is a good example of Villa-Lobos's ability to paint a character with only a few strokes. The delicacy of the piece does not preclude an element of melancholy, which is soon dispelled by the joyful rhythms and lively textures that characterize *Alegria na Horta* (Joy in the Garden), the only piece in the *Suíte* in which a distinctly Brazilian flavour is noticeable. The second piece of the *Suíte Floral* was performed in one of the concerts organized during the Week of Modern Art in São Paulo in 1922.

The *Ciclo Brasileiro*, composed in 1936, is unquestionably one of the most important works that Villa-Lobos wrote for the piano, a representation of the romanticism that characterized much of his work during the 1930s. The four pieces are musical snapshots of the Brazilian character and landscape, each one alluding to

a specific genre of Brazilian music. The opening piece, *Plantio do Caboclo* (The Peasant's Sowing), is based on a hypnotic, hymn-like melody that unfolds through the arpeggiated chords in the left hand, enveloped by an ostinato figure in the right hand. The calm atmosphere is disturbed only through the quick modulations of the central section, which soon give way to the sustained character of the opening. *Impressões Seresteiras* (Impressions of a Serenade Musician) is a waltz built on an engaging melody whose motives are fragmented and recombined in different ways throughout the piece, often combined with sparkling virtuosity. The writing is highly idiomatic, and the wide range of sonorities and textures creates a sharp contrast with the uniform texture of the opening piece. The virtuoso *Festa no Sertão* (The Fête in the Heartlands) is written in the manner of a toccata with elements from the traditional Brazilian dance *batuque*. Its harmonic vocabulary, which includes chords based on the whole-tone scale, is ingeniously offset by rhythmic writing of astonishing diversity. The polyrhythms of the central section support a languid melody in 5/4, creating a type of texture that was particularly favoured by Villa-Lobos in many of his piano works. The last piece, *Dansa do Índio Branco* (Dance of the White Indian) is based on a few ostinato figures that have a distinctly percussive character. The work calls for great virtuosity, especially in bringing out the melody embedded in the fierce succession of alternating chords. The harmonic vocabulary is primarily diatonic, with the melodic motives centred in the key of A minor. This piece has been explained as "the memory of how the composer met in a Brazilian forest a white Indian, who constantly danced and died", but this explanation does not seem plausible, given Villa-Lobos's own assessment of the work as his musical self-portrait.

The six pieces that comprise the collection *Brinquedo de Roda* (Children's Round Games) date from 1912. They represent Villa-Lobos's earliest turn to childhood as a subject for his piano works. Each piece is based on a traditional melody from Brazilian children's round games, which is treated in a simple texture that clearly differentiates between right and left hands. The pieces may have had a didactic purpose, and in the delicacy of their writing they can be compared to the pieces collected in later works such as the *Cirandinhas* and the *Guia Prático*.

The *Danças Características Africanas*, composed in 1915, were performed during the Week of Modern Art in 1922, and became one of the targets of critics who charged the composer with degeneracy in his musical style. They are based on themes of the Caripuna Indians from the state of Mato Grosso, which reveal African ethnic and musical elements. Each of the dances represents a stage in the human life cycle: *Farrapós* (dance of the elderly), *Kankukus* (dance of the youngsters), and *Kankikis* (dance of the children). Because they were composed during a phase in Villa-Lobos's career when he was under the influence of impressionism, the Brazilian character is a little elusive. The syncopated rhythms, however, emerge as a distinctive feature of these works, and remain emblematic of the African influence on Brazilian music. The suite exists also in an orchestral version by the composer himself.

Tristorosa (Sorrowful) is a typical Brazilian waltz, combining a leisurely rhythmic pace with a melody of great languor and sinuosity. It is structured as a five-part rondo, the two contrasting episodes displaying a more lively texture and greater rhythmic activity. Written in 1910, it belongs to an early group of independent waltzes for the piano, a genre which Villa-Lobos would

revisit in the 1930s when he wrote the celebrated *Valsa da Dor*.

Perhaps no other genre is so emblematic of Villa-Lobos's inventiveness than the series of fourteen *Chôros*, written for various instrumental combinations, raising the improvisational character of the traditional *choro* to a compositional determinant and a reflection of Villa-Lobos's highly individual approach to composition, which often accommodated disparate elements and techniques, unexpected juxtapositions between the erudite and the popular, and a treatment of form that was essentially organic and self-generating. The composer himself gave an account of his conception of the *Chôro* as follows: "The *Chôros* represent a new form of musical composition in which different modalities of the Brazilian Indian and popular music are synthesized, having as its principal elements rhythm and some typical melody of a popular nature, which appears in the work every now and then, always modified according to the personality of the composer. The harmonic procedures, too, are almost a complete stylization of the original. The word 'serenade' can give an approximate idea of what 'choros' means". Originally, the *choro* was the quintessential urban genre of Brazilian music, with which Villa-Lobos was familiar through his own participation in ensembles performing nightly serenades in Rio de Janeiro. As cultivated by Villa-Lobos in his own compositions, however, the genre broke all the boundaries of its models. *Chôros No. 1*, originally written for guitar in 1920 and transcribed for piano by Odmar Amaral Gurgel, is still very close to the urban model. It is written as a five-part rondo, suffused with a rhythmic suppleness that recalls the works of Ernesto Nazareth. The work's swinging character is emphasized by tempo rubato and the strategic use of fermatas. *Chôros No. 2*,

originally written for flute and clarinet and transcribed for piano by the composer himself, represents already a complete stylization of the genre, setting it apart from *Chorôs No. 1* and crystalizing the style that was to be adopted for the other works in the series. It has a playful and humorous character which is emphasized by rhythmic motives of an uncertain and hesitant nature. The juxtaposition of an ostinato, rhythmically syncopated figure, with a sustained melody in the central section suggests a conversation between two strong-willed characters who do not seem to see eye-to-eye. The piece ends with a truly comical gesture, as if surprised at its own ending. *Chôrôs No. 5, 'Alma Brasileira'* (Brazilian Soul) is one of Villa-Lobos's best known compositions for the piano. Written in 1925,

the work displays many of the hallmarks of Villa-Lobos's piano writing, including the use of ostinato figures, syncopated accompaniment, polyrhythms, and percussive dissonance. Its form can be expressed as ABC(B)A, each section being differentiated through textural changes. Particularly successful is the interlocking of melody and accompaniment that characterizes the B section, one of the best examples of Villa-Lobos's penchant for multi-layered textures. The march that precedes the recall of the opening section is striking in its rhythmic vitality, offering a sharp contrast to the introspective melody that comprises the main motive of the work.

James Melo

Sonia Rubinsky

Sonia Rubinsky reflects the great tradition of virtuoso performance, with constantly acquired new repertoire, including numerous concertos and solo works ranging from the Baroque to the contemporary. She began her musical studies in her native Campinas in Brazil at the age of five and a year later gave her first recital, making her first appearance as a soloist with an orchestra at the age of twelve. She continued her studies at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem and there she took part in a masterclass with Arthur Rubinstein, which later formed part of a filmed documentary. Sonia Rubinsky holds a Doctorate in Music Arts from The Juilliard School and has studied with Olga Normanha, Benjamin Oren, Irma Wolpe, Vlado Perlemuter, Beveridge Webster, William Daghlian and Jacob Lateiner. As a soloist she has appeared with a number of orchestras, including the major orchestras in Brazil, and as a recitalist has been heard in important music centres in the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel and South America. Her recording of the first volume of the piano music of Villa-Lobos was described in *Gramophone* magazine as one of the five best releases of 1999 and was nominated for a Grammy.



Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)

Musique pour piano, volume 3

En commentant l'œuvre de Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), on ne peut éviter de soulever la question du nationalisme par opposition à l'universalisme. Au XIX^{ème} siècle, le nationalisme était associé aux mouvements politiques de l'époque. Au début du XX^{ème} siècle, il était invariablement lié à un vrai souci de recherche ethnographique et à la préservation nécessaire d'un patrimoine culturel. Ce point de vue influença les grands projets ethnographiques de Bartók, Kodály, Stravinsky, et de Villa-Lobos lui-même, qui en 1905 entreprit une série de voyages de recherche dans tout le Brésil. La façon dont ce matériau fut ensuite incorporé aux œuvres de Villa-Lobos continue à passionner les experts. On y trouve des techniques allant de citations directes à des thèmes entièrement nouveaux présentant un caractère populaire incontestable. Pour Villa-Lobos, le nationalisme devait éviter toute implication politique, mais aussi ne pas tomber dans l'exotisme superficiel. Toutefois, Villa-Lobos, semblait parfois tirer parti de l'exotisme, à tel point que l'écrivain moderniste brésilien Menotti del Picchia le décrit comme « un Indien portant un smoking », faisant sans doute référence à la confluence dans son style d'éléments régionaux et cosmopolites. Il est également significatif de savoir que durant toute sa carrière, Villa-Lobos demeura farouchement indépendant à toute influence directe. Cette indépendance fut soutenue par une existence d'études et de découvertes personnelles ininterrompues, et finit par le pousser à dédaigner toute critique de ses œuvres, qu'il considérait comme « des lettres pour la postérité n'attendant pas de réponse ». Il ajoutait : « Je n'écris pas dans un style dissonant dans le simple but d'être moderne. Ce que j'écris est la conséquence directe de mes études, de la synthèse que j'ai atteinte afin d'exprimer la nature particulière de la culture

brésilienne. J'ai opposé mes études au patrimoine de la musique occidentale et j'ai fini par parvenir à un certain équilibre au sein duquel est représentée l'individualité de mes idées ».

Comme auparavant dans cette série, les œuvres enregistrées dans ce volume présentent un échantillon exhaustif des genres et des styles rencontrés dans la musique pour piano de Villa-Lobos. La majorité de ses compositions pour cet instrument sont des pièces de caractère, indépendantes ou non. Elles révèlent une variété étonnante de procédés formels, mais les morceaux appartenant au même genre partagent souvent une même structure influençant non seulement la nature du matériau musical, mais également les dimensions du morceau.

La *Suíte Floral* est une œuvre magnifique et pourtant relativement méconnue. Ecrite en 1917-18, elle appartient à la phase de la carrière de Villa-Lobos où l'influence de l'impressionnisme français est la plus préminente. Les harmonies et les sonorités de *Idílio na Rede* (Idylle dans un hamac) évoquent Debussy et Fauré. Le second morceau, *Uma Camponeza Cantadeira* (Une paysanne chantante), présente un intéressant dessin de quintolets à la main gauche, suggérant l'incertitude et l'émerveillement de la jeune paysanne. La délicatesse de ce morceau n'exclut pas une certaine mélancolie, vite dissipée par les rythmes joyeux et les vives textures de *Alegria na Horta* (Allégresse dans le jardin), seul morceau de la *Suíte* où l'on remarque un franc parfum brésilien. Le deuxième morceau de la *Suíte Floral* fut créé lors des concerts organisés pour la Semaine de l'Art moderne à São Paulo en 1922.

Le *Ciclo Brasileiro*, composé en 1936, est sans aucun doute l'une des œuvres pour piano les plus importantes de Villa-Lobos, représentation du

romantisme qui le caractérisa souvent dans les années 1930. Ces quatre morceaux sont des instantanés musicaux du caractère brésilien, chacun faisant allusion à un genre spécifique de la musique brésilienne. Le morceau d'ouverture, *Plantio do Caboclo* (Le semis du paysan), s'appuie sur une mélodie hypnotique, apparentée à un hymne. Sa paisible atmosphère est uniquement dérangée par les vives modulations de la section centrale, qui laissent vite place au caractère soutenu de l'ouverture. *Impressões Seresteiras* (Impressions d'un donneur de sérénade) est une valse construite sur une mélodie attrayante dont les motifs sont fragmentés et ré-assemblés de différentes façons tout au long du morceau. L'écriture est très idiomatique et la vaste palette de sonorités et de textures crée un contraste frappant avec l'uniformité du premier morceau. *Festa no Sertão* (Fête dans le Sertão), pièce virtuose, est écrit à la manière d'une toccata avec des éléments de la *batuque*, danse traditionnelle brésilienne. Son vocabulaire harmonique est ingénieusement mis en valeur par une écriture rythmique d'une diversité époustouflante. Le dernier morceau, *Dansa do Índio Branco* (Danse de l'Indien blanc) s'appuie sur quelques dessins ostinato rappelant distinctement des percussions. Son vocabulaire harmonique est principalement diatonique, avec les motifs mélodiques tournant autour de la tonalité de la mineur. Le compositeur déclara qu'il s'agissait de son autoportrait en musique.

Les six morceaux constituant le recueil *Brinquedo de Roda* (Rondes d'enfants) datent de 1912. C'est avec eux que Villa-Lobos se tourne vers l'enfance pour la première fois à l'heure d'écrire pour le piano. Chaque morceau s'appuie sur une ronde brésilienne traditionnelle, traitée dans une texture toute simple dissociant clairement les deux mains. Ces morceaux eurent peut-être un propos didactique, et la délicatesse de leur écriture peut être comparée aux morceaux réunis dans des œuvres ultérieures comme les *Cirandinhas* et

le *Guia Prático*.

Les *Danças Características Africanas*, composées en 1915, furent créées pendant la Semaine de l'Art moderne en 1922 et sévèrement critiquées. Ces danses s'appuient sur des thèmes des Indiens Caripuna de l'état du Mato Grosso qui dénotent des éléments ethniques et musicaux africains. Chacune des danses représente une étape du cycle de la vie : *Farrapos* (danse des anciens), *Kankukus* (danse des jeunes), et *Kankikis* (danse des enfants). On y dénote plus l'influence de l'impressionnisme que celle du caractère brésilien. Les rythmes syncopés demeurent emblématiques de l'influence africaine sur la musique brésilienne. Cette suite existe également dans une version orchestrée par le compositeur.

Tristorosa (Triste) est une valse brésilienne typique, alliant un rythme nonchalant à une mélodie sinueuse et langoureuse. Elle est structurée en rondo en cinq parties, les deux épisodes contrastés déployant une texture plus vive et une plus grande activité rythmique. Ecrite en 1910, elle appartient à un groupe de valses indépendantes pour le piano, genre auquel Villa-Lobos devait revenir dans les années 1930 avec sa fameuse *Valsa da Dor*.

Aucun genre n'est sans doute aussi emblématique de l'inventivité de Villa-Lobos que la série de quatorze *Chôros*, écrits pour divers ensembles d'instruments. Pour le compositeur, « le *Chôros* représente une nouvelle forme de composition musicale dans laquelle sont synthétisées les différentes modalités des musiques populaires et indiennes du Brésil, ayant pour principaux éléments le rythme et une mélodie populaire typique apparaissant dans l'ouvrage par intermittences, toujours modifiés selon la personnalité du compositeur. Les procédés harmoniques sont eux aussi une stylisation presque totale de l'original. Le mot 'sérénade' peut donner une idée approximative de ce que 'choros' signifie ». A l'origine, le *choro* était la quintessence du genre urbain en musique brésilienne, familier à Villa-

Lobos parce qu'il faisait partie d'ensembles jouant des sérénades nocturnes à Rio de Janeiro. Le *Chôros n° 1*, écrit d'abord pour la guitare en 1920 et transcrit pour le piano par Odimar Amaral Gurgel, est encore très proche de son modèle urbain et rappelle par sa souplesse rythmique les œuvres de Ernesto Nazareth. Le *Chôros n° 2*, d'abord écrit pour flûte et clarinette et transcrit pour le piano par le compositeur, constitue déjà une stylisation du genre, le différenciant du *Chôros n° 1* et cristallisant le style qui devait être adopté par la suite.

Son caractère espiègle est souligné par des motifs rythmiques hésitants. Le *Chôros n° 5*, '*Alma Brasileira*' (Ame brésilienne) est l'une des plus célèbres compositions de Villa-Lobos pour le piano. Écrit en 1925, on y retrouve beaucoup de ce qui caractérise l'écriture pour piano de Villa-Lobos.

James Melo

Version française : David Ylla-Somers

Complete tracklist

Suíte Floral (*Floral Suite*)

- | | | |
|-------|---|--------------|
| 1 I | Idílio na Rede
(<i>Idyll in a Hammock</i>) | 7:47
3:00 |
| 2 II | Uma Camponeza Cantadeira
(<i>A Singing Country Girl</i>) | 2:18 |
| 3 III | Alegria na Horta
(<i>Joy in the Garden</i>) | 2:29 |

Ciclo Brasileiro

- | | | |
|-------|---|---------------|
| 4 I | Plantio do Caboclo
(<i>The Peasants' Sowing</i>) | 21:34
5:46 |
| 5 II | Impressões Seresteiras
(<i>Impressions of a Serenade Musician</i>) | 6:34 |
| 6 III | Festa no Sertão
(<i>The Fête in the Heartlands</i>) | 5:20 |
| 7 IV | Dansa do Índio Branco
(<i>Dance of the White Indian</i>) | 3:54 |

Brinquedo de Roda

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| | (<i>Children's Round Games</i>) | 11:41 |
| 8 I | Tira o seu pezinho
(<i>Put your little foot out</i>) | 2:15 |

- | | | |
|--------|--|------|
| 9 II | A moda da carranquinha
(<i>The song of the little cranky one</i>) | 2:24 |
| 10 III | Os três cavalheiros
(<i>The three little gentlemen</i>) | 1:47 |
| 11 IV | Uma, duas angolinhas
(<i>One, two little guinea-fowls</i>) | 1:37 |
| 12 V | Garibaldi foi à missa
(<i>Garibaldi went to mass</i>) | 1:50 |
| 13 VI | Vamos todos cirandar
(<i>Let's all go dancing</i>) | 1:48 |

Danças Características Africanas

- | | | |
|--------|---|---------------|
| 14 I | Farrapós (<i>Dance of the Elderly</i>) | 11:32
4:19 |
| 15 II | Kankukus (<i>Dance of the Youngsters</i>) | 4:22 |
| 16 III | Kankikis (<i>Dance of the Children</i>) | 2:51 |
| 17 | Tristorosa (<i>Sorrowful</i>) | 4:51 |
| 18 | Chôros No. 1 "Típico" | 4:59 |
| 19 | Chôros No. 2 | 2:45 |
| 20 | Chôros No. 5 "Alma Brasileira"
(<i>Brazilian Soul</i>) | 4:56 |



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VILLA-LOBOS: Piano Music Volume 3

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The hugely prolific Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos remained throughout his career fiercely independent of any one compositional style or influence, and the works in this recording offer a comprehensive sample of the variety of genres and styles to be found in his piano music. The majority of his compositions for the instrument consist of character pieces, either single or organized into suites or collections, and while they reveal a proliferation of traditional formal procedures, they are united in exhibiting the composer's unique synthesis of Brazilian and Western cultures.

Heitor VILLA-LOBOS

(1887-1959)

Piano Music Volume 3

Suíte Floral *	7:47	11 IV Uma, duas angolinhas	1:37
1 I Idílio na Rede	3:00	12 V Garibaldi foi à missa	1:50
2 II Uma Camponeza Cantadeira	2:18	13 VI Vamos todos cirandar	1:48
3 III Alegria na Horta	2:29	Danças Características Africanas *	11:32
Ciclo Brasileiro **	21:34	14 I Farrapós	4:19
4 I Plantio do Caboclo	5:46	15 II Kankukus	4:22
5 II Impressões Seresteiras	6:34	16 III Kankikus	2:51
6 III Festa no Sertão	5:20	17 Tristorosa ***	4:51
7 IV Dansa do Índio Branco	3:54	18 Chôros No. 1 "Típico" *	4:59
Brinquedo de Roda **	11:41	19 Chôros No. 2 *	2:45
8 I Tira o seu pezinho	2:15	20 Chôros No. 5 "Alma Brasileira" ***	4:56
9 II A moda da carranquinha	2:24		
10 III Os três cavalheiros	1:47		

Sonia Rubinsky, Piano

A more detailed track list may be found on page 8 of the booklet

* Ed. Arthur Napoleão Ltda., ** Ed. Irmãos Vitale Ltda., *** Ed. Max Eschig • Recorded in Grace Church on the Hill, Toronto, Canada, from 19th to 23rd September, 2000 • Producers: Bonnie Silver & Norbert Kraft
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oil painting by Candido Portinari (Coleção Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro)

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