



Cayambis Institute for Latin American Studies in Music
Latin American Classical Notes — Hosted by John L. Walker
Program 046, May 29, 2022

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1908): “Confidência.” At the time of its composition in 1908, Villa-Lobos had yet to make a name for himself as a composer. This song is important not only because it is thought to have been his first song, but also, as a largely self-taught composer, it allows us to take a peek into his search for the most appropriate models for his musical ideas.

• Marc Heller, tenor, Alfred Heller. “Modinhas e canções, 1,” Etcetera.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1916): *Danças características africanas, II*, “Kankukus.” Like a number of Villa-Lobos’ orchestral pieces, this three-movement work was originally composed for piano. Regarding this original version, David Appleby, one of several of Villa-Lobos’ biographers, notes that it was one of Villa-Lobos’s most advanced works from that time and that it shows “a rhythmic intensity not found in [his] previous compositions.” Villa-Lobos claimed that the titles of each movement were of African origin. “Kankukus” is a dance of old age, in which desires and hopes are no longer fulfilled.

• Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Roberto Duarte. “Latin American Classics,” Marco Polo.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1926): *Choros no. 4*. Premiered in Paris in 1927, Villa-Lobos’ fourth *chôros* is for three horns and trombone; in fact, this combination sometimes emulates the sound of a military band. This being said, there’s not much that’s new in this work; rather, in typical Villa-Lobos fashion it shares at least a few of its musical ideas with other pieces.

• Etienne Maille, Nico De Marchi, Philippe Cerfontaine, Alain Pire. “Heitor Villa-Lobos,” Ricercar.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1917): *Sexteto místico*. The unusual instrumentation of this sextet (flute, oboe, sax, guitar, celeste and harp) has resulted in few performances. In fact, it was not even premiered until 1962. Though Villa-Lobos preferred unusual instrumental combinations, in this case, this piece represents his first attempt to emulate the characteristic timbre of the choro, which is street music performed instrumentally, and usually by the same instruments featured in this work. However, special attention should be paid to the guitar not only because of its dual harmonic and melodic role, but also because much of this piece’s harmony is derived from the guitar’s open strings.

• OSESP Ensemble. “Heitor Villa-Lobos,” Naxos.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1919): *Symphony No. 3, “A guerra,” IV, Battle*. Commissioned to celebrate the Treaty of Versailles, this work is not only the first of a symphonic trilogy, but also, it’s the third in a cycle of five to have been written in the style of Vincent d’Indy. Furthermore, it was originally in three movements; its slow movement, which apparently was not composed until 1946, was inserted between the second and third movements, of which the second is said to bear some resemblance to Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony.

• São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Isaac Karabtchevsky. “Heitor Villa-Lobos,” Naxos.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1926): *Três poemas indígenas, I, “Canidé Ioune-Sabath*.” This work is similar to *Choro no. 3* in that it was inspired in an indigenous tune that was noted down during the mid-16th century near present-day Rio de Janeiro by the French explorer Jean de Léry. In this song, the theme is supported by a simple accompaniment consisting of a few chords above a pedal point.

• Marcel Quillévéré, tenor / Noël Lee, piano. “Villa-Lobos Songs,” Opus 111.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1928): *Quintette en forme de choro*. Like many of his other works for winds, this quintet is written in a kind of form that is based on the gradual emergence of motifs, rather than the traditional method of thematic development. It has many contrasting sections and its many instrumental solos have an

improvisatory character. However, it's important to note that the designation, "in the form of a choro," is nothing more than a supplemental title that was most likely added prior to its publication in 1930.

- Quintette Moraguès. "Quintette Moraguès," Valois.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1936): Ciclo brasileiro, II, "Impressões seresteiras." Writing about this piece, Villa-Lobos scholar Lisa Peppercorn finds that "the most beautiful and perhaps the most convincing movement is the second, where the development of themes is carried through rather successfully." But she goes on to say that "idiosyncratic devices of his earlier style appear again in this work, such as sustained notes in the bass and chords in the seventh, the harmonic background, the transitions, and in particular the somewhat awkward coda."

- Anna-Stella Schic, piano. "Heitor Villa-Lobos," Ados.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1937): Distribuição de flôres. Returning from Europe in 1930, Villa-Lobos became very involved with politics and music education, and because of this, responsible for many public ceremonies and events. At one of these ceremonies in 1937, a work for flute and guitar entitled *Motivos gregos* was performed, which was eventually published under its present title. In this short work, the composer evokes the same Greek antiquity in which he immersed himself while composing several of his earlier symphonic poems.

- William Bennett / Simon Wynberg. "Villa-Lobos : Music for Flute," Helios.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1931): String Quartet No. 5 (complete). It has been said that Villa-Lobos' most important contributions to contemporary chamber music is his collection of seventeen string quartets. Each has a distinct character in which he shows the full extent of his mastery and originality. The earliest ones are laden with folk elements, while the later ones reach a more universal level of expression.

- Cuarteto Latinoamericano. "Latin American String Quartets," Elan.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1940): Mandu Çarará. In this work, Villa-Lobos establishes a contrast between the style of a sullen adult choir, which represents the Curupira, a mythological creature of Brazilian folklore, and the lightness of a frisky children's choir, which sings a Nheengatu text—the language of some 3000 people that live in northwestern Brazil—that has a strongly onomatopoeic character. Frank Coleman described the work as "startling," and that it "impresses by its boldness and vigor," after it was performed at Tanglewood in 1949. In addition, in his review he provided a useful description that will help guide us through this work: "The chorus sings to syllables imitating Brazilian tongues, and even bark on occasion. The only word they pronounce is the dancer's name, Mandu-çarará, intoned like a chant as the final triumphal dance begins."

- Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo / Isaac Karabtchevsky. "Heitor Villa-Lobos," SWR.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1939): New York Skyline Melody. Orchestrated from the original version for piano, this work is based on the concept invented by Joseph Schillinger known as milli metrization, in which the contours of a mountain, landscape or hill are transferred onto graph paper.

- Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra of the SWR / Carl St. Clair, "Heitor Villa-Lobos," Testigo.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (BRA, 1945): Bachianas brasileiras no. 9 (complete). In two movements, Prelude and Fugue, this work is scored for either chorus or string orchestra. We'll be listening to the version for orchestra. Composed in New York, it was first performed by a string quintet in Rio de Janeiro in 1948.

- São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Roberto Minczuk. "Heitor Villa-Lobos," BIS