

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SERESTA

Good evening. Boa Noite.

Before we begin I would like to acknowledge several individuals for their invaluable contributions.

First I would like to recognize Mina Miller. She is the founding Artistic Director for Music of Remembrance. The 12 year pursuit of her artistic vision is an inspiration to me and one of her concerts in this venue provided the model for my production of tonight's concert.

Next I would like to thank Stan Leopard. Even though he is a busy and prolific composer, he took time to out to record tonight's performance. Also, I would like to thank Peter Comley for letting us use his microphone tonight. With work samples from this concert I hope to garner funding to restage this music and produce a studio recording. If you are interested in joining the support for these projects, please let me know.

I would also like to acknowledge Antonio and Graca Ribero. For 10 years they have nurtured a warm Brazilian community at their restaurant Tempero do Brasil. Thank you for spreading the word about this concert. I look forward to raising a caipirinha to you at Tempero very soon!

Thanks to volunteers Kate Gengo and Clint Collins for helping with logistics tonight. Thanks to Steve Peters for managing this wonderful venue.

Thanks to my mother Anne Griggs for managing the CD sales table tonight. She left the sun in Florida just to be here tonight.

My deepest thanks goes to my wife Doris Kogan. She has been my biggest supporter and muse for these past 28 years.

And thanks also to my son Ben. He allowed me time off from video gaming and watching You Tube videos so that I could work on this concert. Even though I haven't been able to keep up my gaming skills, thanks for still playing coop mode with such a total noob.

And on behalf of the musicians tonight, I thank you for your attendance. I am so glad you are here tonight to complete this project with me.

Introduce musicians

Tonight you will hear music meant to communicate the sadness and hope of love. Most of the music tonight was originally written by Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. He was born in Rio de Janeiro on March 5, 1887 and died there on November 17, 1959, just over 50 years ago. He was very prolific, writing for single instruments, chamber ensembles, orchestras, ballet, opera, film, and even a

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Broadway musical. You will hear examples from most of these genres tonight. His ability to improvise, recast melodies in new emotional domains, advocate for his nation's musical heritage, tell imaginative stories, and work hard at having people hear his music reminds me of many jazz musicians I know. The melodic content and harmonic language of many of his works provides a fertile bed for jazz improvisation.

We will begin with two guitar preludes written in 1940 dedicated to his wife Mindinha. These pieces were written later in Villa-Lobos' life. At that time he was an avid nationalist, working in the government to promote Brazilian musical education and performance. The first is Prelude #4, Homage to the Brazilian Indian and the second is Prelude #1, Homage to Brazilian Country Music.

Prelude #4

Prelude #1

The next two pieces tonight come from Typical Brazilian Songs, a collection of 12 traditional melodies spanning from the geographically remote Parisis Indians to the urban culture of Rio's Carnival. Villa-Lobos transcribed indigenous melodies to use in this song cycle. The first song we will play is Papae Curumiassu, a Lullaby for the Coboclo Indians. This will be followed by Xo, Xo Passarinho, Shoo, Shoo, Little Bird. The text for this song comes from a Brazilian legend about the life cycle in which a princess is buried. Her hair sprouts from the ground and birds begin to feed.

Papae Curumiassu

Xo, Xo Passarinho

In the late 1800's, parents would host dances in their home to keep an eye on their children's social circles. Musicians would gather to play popular dance music. A Brazilian dance called maxixe would be accompanied by a musical group made up of a flute, cavaquinhos (small guitars), and violoes (guitars). These groups played a style of syncopated and improvised music called choro from the Portuguese word chorar "to cry" or lament. Villa-Lobos gave this description: "These choros are popular music. Choros in Brazil... are always made by musicians playing together, good or bad musicians making music for their own pleasure, often at night, improvising, and the musician demonstrates his skill and his technique. And it is always very sentimental, this is important." If there was a singer the group was typically called seresteiros (serenaders) and the music was serestas (serenades). Villa-Lobos gave this description: "Seresta is a new form of vocal composition reminiscent of all kinds of traditional serenades, all toadas (tunes) of our beggars, wandering minstrels, of various songs and calls of our waggoners, cowherds, bulltamers... stone masons, etc., who come from afar, from the hinterland, and also from the Brazilian capital."

We will play three serestas tonight without a singer. The first is Modinha or Sentimental Love Song. This will be followed by Saudades da Minha Vida or Nostalgia for My Life.

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Lastly we will play Serenata. Of this last piece Villa-Lobos wrote this evocative description.

Serenaders play with passion. The little street winds up the hill and behind the window a girl sighs, observing the moon. In the street, deserted and empty, an old woman passes, reciting her rosary to the moon; the flower of the night is at hand, mute, with the call of love of the serenaders. In the deserted and empty street like a sad soul, the old woman goes, reciting her rosary to the moon; pure are those who suffer for love.

Modinha Saudades da Minha Vida Serenata

This next song is a departure from Villa-Lobos. It is a North American lament of spurned love. This song was written for Ella Fitzgerald to sing in the film Pete Kelly's Blues. The song was not included in the film. It was made into a hit by Julie London in the film The Girl Can't Help It. It was also used in the film V for Vendetta. It was released in a Portuguese version as Chora um Rio and was recently recorded in English by Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso.

Cry Me a River

Villa-Lobos was a pioneer in setting Portuguese text to music. At the time, Italian was the preferred language of the concert hall. This next piece sets a poem by Brazilian author Carlos Sa. The text describes the sun rising like a red balloon over the sea so Villa-Lobos painted this text with a melody that slowly rises like the sun over the beach in Rio.

Manha na Praia

An interesting anecdote to illustrate Villa-Lobos' self promotion is that when he lived in Paris, he played up the noble savage theme that was popular at the time by calling himself a white Indian. A critic called him an Indian in a tuxedo. Another story published in a Parisian article describing how Villa-Lobos had been kidnapped by cannibals. During the three days before he was to be eaten, he continued to compose, transcribed the cannibal's songs, and used later used them in his music.

Next we will hear a melody from Villa-Lobos' Broadway musical, Magdalena which played in LA, San Francisco, and New York. The story is set at the headwaters of the Magdalena River, deep in the South American jungle of Colombia where foreigners were planning to extract secret treasures and gems from the jungle. The piece we will play is entitled Lost.

Lost

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Next we will step away from Villa-Lobos once again to play a serenade to my father. Tonight is the 2nd anniversary of my father's death. He was a scientist and researched blood flow in the heart. He was what we call today a lifelong learner. In retirement he read several books simultaneously on topics like evolutionary psychology, the mind body connection, and zen while also enjoying classic fiction. My parents moved next door to us when our son was born. My father and I would often walk together and he would recount memories of his life and career. This piece is entitled Remembering.

Remembering

This next piece comes from the choro music I described earlier. Traditionally, a song from this genre has three sections, alternating between major and minor keys, with improvisation on the last section by a single soloist.

Mazurka – Choros

The next two pieces are from a project that started as a score for the 1959 film *Green Mansions*. The film starred Audrey Hepburn, Anthony Perkins, and Lee J. Cobb. Criterion has just reissued it on DVD and you can rent it at Scarecrow. Bronislaw Kaper orchestrated the film score and Villa-Lobos was not happy with the result. In response he created a symphonic poem *Forest of the Amazon* with new music and poetry by Dora Vasconcellos. He encouraged the Brazilian soprano Bidu Sayao to come out of retirement and sing the new work. The story involves a bird girl who can converse with the forest animals in their native language. She dies in a forest fire but her spirit song lives on much like the story from *Xo, Xo, Passarinho*. The two selections we will play are the songs of the bird girl talking to the animals.

Vocalize 2

Anticipando Jobim

Villa-Lobos wrote several pieces that he labeled Choro. Choro # 5 was titled *Alma Brasileira* or the Soul of Brazil. Of this piece Villa-Lobos said, "The most interesting aspects of this choro are the irregular rhythmic and melodic formulas, giving an impression of rubato, or a melody with ritardando, which gives the impression of delay and pause, which is exactly the practice of seresteiros (street singers)."

Alma Brasileira

While in Paris, Villa-Lobos wrote of his longing for his home country. One of the pieces was *Saudades das Selvas Brasileiras* or Longing for the Brazilian Forests.

Saudades das Selvas Brasileiras

We will close tonight's concert with Villa-Lobos' most well known melody, the *Aria* from *Bachianas Brasileiras #5*. This is one of nine suites composed in honor of Johann Sebastian Bach. This movement was written in 1938 for voice and 8 cellos.

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The text is a poem by Ruth Valadares Correia.

Evening, a cloud grows pink, slow and transparent,
Above the space, dreaming and beautiful,
The moon rises, comes softly in the infinite,
Decking out the evening, like a gentle girl
Who makes ready and dreamily beautifies herself
With anxiety of soul to look beautiful.
She cries to the sky and to the earth, to all nature.
The birds are silent at her sad plaints,
And the sea reflects all its wealth...
Softly the light of the moon wakes now,
The cruel yearning that laughs and weeps!
Evening, a cloud grows pink, slow and transparent,
Above the space, dreaming and beautiful!