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VILLA-LOBOS' CHOROS NO. 5 – ALMA BRASILEIRA (BRAZILIAN SOUL)

by

CAMILA BRIOLI

Under the Direction of Marie Sumner-Lott

ABSTRACT

Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) is one of the most famous Brazilian composers of all time. He is known for composing in a unique and exotic style, especially given his frequent use of Brazilian elements in his music. He is also associated with Brazilian Modernism, most notably for the nationalistic influences in his compositions. Scholars agree that one of his greatest works is his set of *Choros*, composed during the 1920s. His *Choros no. 5* (composed for solo piano) exemplifies characteristics of Modernism, nationalism and Brazilian popular music. The purpose of this thesis is to try to identify these elements in his *Choros no. 5* and to try to understand the influence they may have for the work's performance. This thesis discusses Villa-Lobos' life and influences during his early years; Brazilian Modernism (associated with nationalism); the *choros* genre as a popular music manifestation; and finally, Villa-Lobos' set of *Choros*, focusing on *Choros no.5*.

INDEX WORDS: Villa-Lobos, Choros, Brazilian Music, Nationalism, Modernism

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by

CAMILA BRIOLI

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Music

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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Camila Cursio Brioli
2014

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1 INTRODUCTION

When we speak of Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), the image that comes to mind is that he is the greatest, most famous and most important Brazilian composer of the twentieth-century, if not of all time. This type of claim is defended by many, and can be found in several biographies and academic studies about him and his works:

Without doubt, the most important and famous Brazilian composer of the twentieth-century is Heitor Villa-Lobos.¹

The Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, famous at home and abroad, and hailed as the most important representative of his country, made a name for himself, principally because of the Brazilian character of his music.²

Heitor Villa-Lobos was undoubtedly Brazil's best-known composer during his lifetime.³

Villa-Lobos is a personality that has received all kinds of homages in Brazil and outside of it, and is, with no doubt, one of the greatest Brazilians of all times.⁴

Villa-Lobos stands as the single most significant creative figure in twentieth-century Brazilian art music.⁵

Villa-Lobos was born in a period full of socio-cultural changes in Brazil. In the Arts field, the artists were seeking to better represent the changes that their country was going through. This was conceived mainly by the idea of rejecting the European influences and its academicism that prevailed in the country until the twentieth-century. The aesthetics that dominated, in Brazil, the early decades of the twentieth-century was the Modernism, with its

¹ Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour Thomas G. C. Garcia. *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 186.

² Lisa M. Peppercorn, "Foreign Influences in Villa-Lobos's Music," *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv*. 3/1 (1977): 39.

³ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), xiii.

⁴ Villa-Lobos é uma personalidade que tem recebido todo o tipo de homenagens no Brasil e no exterior, e sem dúvida, é um dos grandes brasileiros de todos os tempos. Vasco Mariz, "Villa-Lobos no Século XXI." *Brasiliana: Revista quadrimestral da Academia Brasileira de Música* 29 (2009): 2.

⁵ Gerard Béhague, "Villa-Lobos, Heitor." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed October 18, 2013).

high nationalistic tendencies. Villa-Lobos, although never consciously or purposefully, composed much of his music within this aesthetics.

Villa-Lobos began to learn music with his father, who, besides teaching him how to play cello and clarinet, would take him to several classical music concerts and rehearsals. Villa-Lobos always claimed that the music education he had from his father was enough for him; he became, then, a self-taught composer. He composed a huge amount of music, linearly unequal, without a logical evolution.

Maria Sekeff, although recognizing that Villa-Lobos' style was not gradually developed, tried, however, to group his works within the same characteristics, and came up with a division of his compositional styles in four stages: post-romantic; fauvism; neoclassic; universalist.⁶ Adhemar Nóbrega also propose a division of Villa-Lobos' works in four stages, but different than the ones proposed by Sekeff. According to Nóbrega, the first period is described as Villa-Lobos' "learning" years, and goes from 1899 until 1912; the second period goes from 1912 until 1920, when the composer was seeking his personal style of composition; the third and most important one, which Nóbrega described as the "statement of his maturity," goes from 1920 to 1929; and the last period goes from 1930 until the end of his life (in 1959), when Villa-Lobos saw recognized his triumph as a composer and educator.⁷

Apart from the division of periods in Villa-Lobos' works and the discussion of which one of them contained his most significant compositions, scholars tend to agree that his best outputs were his set of *Choros*, in the 1920s, and his set of *Bachianas*, in the 1930s.

⁶ Maria L. Sekeff, "Villa-Lobos, Um Novo Olhar," *ARTEunesp* 12 (1996): 185-189.

⁷ Adhemar Nóbrega, *Os Choros de Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos e Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1975), 24.

His set of *Choros* is his seen as his “master piece.”⁸ This set is claimed by many as the compositions “with which Villa-Lobos most clearly established his aesthetic – a daring balance of the vernacular and the Modernist.”⁹ Simon Wright defends that Villa-Lobos’ style is best represented in the *Choros*: “It is this *Chôros* manner, representing all aspects of Brazilian life in music, that is Villa-Lobos’s basic style. [...] Each of the *Chôros* represents an expansion of techniques employed in earlier years.”¹⁰ Gerard Béhague highlighted the importance of the *Choros* by describing them as “sixteen works, bearing the title of *Choros* [...] are generally considered the most significant contribution of Villa-Lobos not only to the music of Brazil, but to the twentieth-century music in general.”¹¹

From all of the *Choros* Villa-Lobos composed, Andrade Muricy points out that the *Choros no. 5* is the “most known of all, maybe because it was written for piano.”¹² Tarcísio Filho and Mauricy Martin state that this “Choros no. 5 – *Brazilian Soul* has the main characteristics of Villa-Lobos’ idiomatic, and represents a synthesis of the composer’s pianistic writing.”¹³ In fact, it is recognizable in this piece the influences of the music made by the *chorões* (popular musicians from Rio de Janeiro, with whom Villa-Lobos had the chance to play with), along with other musical Brazilian elements (such as the rhythm), and some Modernist

⁸ José Candido de Andrade Muricy, *Villa-Lobos: Uma Interpretação* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1961), 43.

⁹ Gerard Béhague, “Villa-Lobos, Heitor.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed October 18, 2013).

¹⁰ Simon Wright, “Villa-Lobos: The Formation of His Style,” *Soundings: A Music Journal* 8 (1979): 55.

¹¹ Gerard Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil’s Musical Soul* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin Press, 1994), 72.

¹² From all pieces of Villa-Lobos’ set of *Choros*, only two of them are for solo instruments: No. 1, for solo guitar, and No.5, for piano solo. The fact that these two pieces do not demand a big ensemble for performance, make them be more often performed than Villa-Lobos’ other *Choros*. For further information about the *Choros*’ instrumentations, see Tabel 5-1. José Candido de Andrade Muricy, *Villa-Lobos: Uma Interpretação* (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1961), 45.

¹³ “Choros nº 5 – *Alma Brasileira* possui as principais características do idiomático de Heitor Villa-Lobos e representa uma síntese da escrita pianística do compositor.” Tarcísio G. Filho and Mauricy Martin, “Aspectos do Idioma Pianístico de Heitor Villa-Lobos na Peça Choros nº 5 *Alma Brasileira*,” *Revista eletrônica de musicologia* 10 (2006).

compositional characteristics. Villa-Lobos gave this particular *Choros* a subtitle, *Alma Brasileira Brasileira* (Brazilian Soul), which suggests some important meaning behind it.

From all of these observations, some questions can be made: Why did Villa-Lobos received and still receives such great fame and prestige? Why is *he* seen as the composer who best created a Brazilian National Style and best represented the Modernism in Music? What is so interesting and innovative about these set of pieces called *Choros*, mainly no. 5? Finally, why did his *Choros no. 5* received such a meaningful subtitle (Brazilian Soul), and what does that mean?

I believe that a good performance of the *Choros no. 5* can be made if one answer the questions above and understand the influences found in this piece. To achieve this goal, this thesis is organized in four chapters. The first chapter covers the first decades of Villa-Lobos' life and influences he had during that period. The second chapter is about Modernism in Brazil, focusing in the music field. The third chapter covers the origins and characteristics of the *choro* as a popular music genre. The final chapter briefly discusses Villa-Lobos' sets of *Choros*, to then shortly analyze the piece *Choros no. 5* and the influences found in it.

2 VILLA-LOBOS' EARLY YEARS AND HIS FIRST TRIPS TO PARIS

Villa-Lobos was born in March 5, 1887¹⁴, in a middle-class family in Rio de Janeiro. His parents were Noêmia Umbelina Villa-Lobos and Raul Villa-Lobos. Noêmia came from a Portuguese family that imported codfish. Her father, Antônio Santos Monteiro, was a famous amateur musician and composer of popular songs; his most-famous one was *Quadrilha das Moças* (Young Ladies' Quadrille). Even though Monteiro was considered to be famous, frequently performing at the wealthy people's houses, he struggled to make a sufficient income for the family. The struggle that Monteiro faced during his life traumatized Noêmia, who decided to not let any of her four children follow the music path.

On the other hand, Raul Villa-Lobos was also an amateur musician, but of classical music. Raul came from a Spanish family, who also had problems to support their child. Raul wanted to be a physician, but the financial situation of his family did not allow him to continue his studies.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Raul was an intelligent figure, interested in many fields – he was a “senior officer of the Brazilian National Library, a scholar, author of several publications on history and cosmography, and a good musician.”¹⁶

When Noêmia was pregnant of Heitor, the couple moved to the second floor of a friends' dry goods store; the owners of the store became Heitor's godparents – José Jorge Rangel and

¹⁴ Villa-Lobos year of birth was, for a long period, uncertain; he never had a birth register. He himself did not worry about the accuracy of the year, for him providing different years or birth during his lifetime. Different biographers date his birth from 1881 to 1891. His Brazilian voting paper attests he was born in 1883; his French *carte d'identité* carries the year of 1891; his mother declared in his marriage that he was born in 1886. The real year was discovered by Vasco Mariz, who visited the church Villa-Lobos was baptized and found the register that he was born in 1887. For more information related to Villa-Lobos' birth date, see Lisa Peppercorn, “History of Villa-Lobos' Birthday Date,” *The Monthly Musical Record* 78 (1948): 153-155.

¹⁵ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 1-3.

¹⁶ Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 3.

Leopoldina do Amaral, nicknamed Zizinha.¹⁷ The family stayed in that location until Heitor became six years old, when they moved first to the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro, and then to the state of Minas Gerais.¹⁸

A little after Heitor was born, in 1888, Princess Isabel signed the *Lei Áurea* (Golden Law), which abolished slavery in Brazil. This action caused “an economic crisis among the owners of large plantations, who had depended on slaves to raise crops for export.”¹⁹ The political consequence was the Proclamation of Republic, on 15 November 1889, dethroning the Emperor Dom Pedro II. Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca, who led the Proclamation, became Brazil’s first President. His Vice-President was Marshal Floriano Vieira Peixoto, who became President after him (governing from 1891 until 1894).²⁰ Raul Villa-Lobos often wrote essays that were published in newspapers of Rio de Janeiro; unsatisfied with the present military politics, he wrote articles criticizing Marshal Floriano Peixoto. The propagation of these articles, allied with the fact that he was being falsely accused of stealing books from the National Library

¹⁷ In my research, I found many dissimilar information related to Villa-Lobos’ life. One of them was caused by the use of nicknames – most of the times, figures related to Villa-Lobos and his family would be cited only by their nicknames. When cited by their names, the authors would not provide the person’s full name, and since most of the names cited are very common in Brazil, it is hard to identify the right person the name is related with. In the case above, the information that the biographers agree is that “Zizinha” was the aunt who played piano and introduced Villa-Lobos to the music of Bach. The real name of this aunt, however, is dubious: Vasco Mariz, in his book *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* and Francisco Pereira da Silva in his book *Villa-Lobos*, only cite the nickname Zizinha; Gerard Béhague, in his book *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil’s Musical Soul*, and David Appleby in his book *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* link the nickname to Leopoldina do Amaral; Bruno Kiefer, however, in his book *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* links Zizinha as Maria Carolina Rangel.

¹⁸ Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 4.

¹⁹ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 5.

²⁰ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 5; Lisa Peppercorn *The World of Villa-Lobos in Pictures and Documents* (Hants: Scholar Press, 1996), 27-31.

(where he worked), made the Villa-Lobos' family decide to "exile", to prevent Raul from being arrested.²¹

The Villa-Lobos' family lived in several small towns in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais until 1893, when Raul's friends assured him that the library "lawsuit had been cleared up, the offensive nature of the newspaper articles appeared to have been forgotten."²² Those trips were influential to Heitor's musical creation – for the first time he had the chance to be in touch with authentic popular rural music, fact that influenced the formation of his compositional style.

David Appleby translated Francisco Silva's description of Heitor's music experiences during that time:

The most exciting part of his experiences was the new world of sounds and the strumming of guitars and homemade string instruments such as the "*rebequinha*." This kind of sound was entirely new to him. He came to love the sounds of homemade instruments made by popular musicians in God's rural Brazil.²³

Besides the musical influence coming from his aunt Zizinha, his father Raul was the main responsible for the musical learning of Heitor. After the family moved back to Rio de Janeiro, Raul would often have gatherings at their house, where he and other friends would play classical chamber music.²⁴ Heitor would often be caught listening to the music that was performed in those occasions. His father, noticing the interest that his son had in Music, decided then to give him lessons. Since Raul played the cello (he also played the clarinet), he started to teach that instrument to Heitor; he adapted a viola with a peg, so then Heitor could have a cello that was his size. Heitor, around the age of eight, decided to play his father's clarinet by his own. Raul

²¹ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 7-8.

²² David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 8.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 4-5.

caught him trying to play his clarinet, and decided to also teach him how to play that instrument.²⁵

Besides giving cello and clarinet lessons to his son, Raul also took Heitor to performances of classical music, such as concerts and operas.²⁶ In the popular music field, Raul would sometimes take Heitor to visit a friend – Alberto Brandão - who was an authority in the folklore music of the Northeast of Brazil (Brandão would gather in his house singers and serenaders *nordestinos*).²⁷ Heitor Villa-Lobos later recognized all the effort his father made to teach him music. Heitor said that “the basic musical instruction he received from his father was complete, and he felt no need for additional studies.”²⁸ Referring to the musical training he had from his father, Heitor said:

With him I always attended rehearsals, concerts and operas... I also learned how to play the clarinet, and I was required to identify the genre, style, character and origin of compositions, in addition to recognizing quickly the name of a note, of sounds or noises... Watch out, when I didn't get it right.²⁹

Although Raul was mostly taking Heitor's musical education towards the erudite branch, the popular music was what he was more interested in. During his boyhood in Rio de Janeiro, Villa-Lobos could hear the music of the popular street musicians, and both their music and their life-style attracted him. Those groups of musicians were mainly amateurs and relatively poor people, who had amazing improvising skills. They would play pieces denominated as *choros*, and they would call themselves *chorões* (weepers).

²⁵ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 3.

²⁶ Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 123.

²⁷ Francisco Pereira da Silva, *Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Três, 1974), 50; Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 5.

²⁸ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 10.

²⁹ Heitor Villa-Lobos, in an interview in 1957, as quoted and translated by Gérard Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil's Musical Soul* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin Press, 1994), 3.

Villa-Lobos had a huge desire to become part of one of these groups. The one he wanted to join, according to Vasco Mariz “consisted of Quincas Laranjeiras, composer, guitarist, and leader of the group; Luiz de Souza and Luiz Gonzaga da Hora, bass horn; Anacleto de Medeiros, saxophone; Macário and Irineu de Almeida, ophicleide (a brass instrument used by the nineteenth-century Brazilian bands); Zé de Cavaquinho, small guitar; Juca Kalu, Spíndola; and Felisberto Marques, flute.”³⁰ Villa-Lobos’s mother, Noêmia, would never allow him to follow a professional musical career (she wanted him to go to the medical school), and both her and Raul would certainly not allow Heitor to play with street musicians, who were not well-seen in a higher-level society. He had to learn how to play the guitar³¹ hidden from his parents, since the instrument was associated with the rabble street musicians.³²

The freedom to approach the *carioca* popular music came only with his father death, in July 18, 1899. In any case, the negative reaction his mother had when his son expressed his interest in joining the *chorões* is described by Appleby:

Dona Noêmia was absolutely terrified and very dogmatically opposed the idea. She rightly sensed that such activities would distract her son from his studies and further encourage his musical ambitions.³³

Villa-Lobos solved that problem by first moving to the small house in the back of his family’s propriety (a place where he could escape at night without being seen by his mother), and then by later moving to his aunt’s – Leopoldina do Amaral (Zizinha) – house.³⁴

³⁰ Vasco Mariz (1989), 34; quoted in David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 16.

³¹ Another discrepancy occurs when biographers describe Villa-Lobos’ guitar learning. Francisco Pereira da Silva claims that he had guitar (and *capoeira*) lessons from José Rebelo, popularly known as Zé do Cavaquinho; Vasco Mariz claims that Villa-Lobos had guitar lessons from a neighbor; and Gerard Bé-hague claims that he learned how to play the instrument by himself.

³² Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 3-4; Francisco Pereira da Silva, *Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Três, 1974), 50-53.

³³ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 14.

Villa-Lobos would change residence again once he married his first wife, Lucília Guimarães in 1913. He moved to her parent's house, and all her family was completely supportive to his career and style of composition. Around the World War I, Villa-Lobos and Lucília decided to make bigger efforts to divulgate his compositions through Brazil, scheduling concerts around nearby cities. The invitation he received to be part of the *Semana de Arte Moderna de 1922* (Week of Modern Art of 1922) was, then, something irrecusable.

After been through the *Semana de Arte Moderna de 1922*, and analyzing the audience's acceptance of his works until that point, Villa-Lobos realized that the only way he could become famous inside of Brazil was if he had fame outside of it, like had happened already to Carlos Gomes, Henrique Oswald and others. In this same year, 1922, a bill was presented to the Congress to "provide a grant for Villa-Lobos to go to Europe to promote Brazilian composers." After several discussions and disagreements between the politicians, Villa-Lobos was granted 40 *contos* (Brazil's currency by that time) to help his expenses with 12 concerts abroad. Nevertheless, not all the promised money was paid to the composer – his main financial aid came from some wealthy friends he had, who helped support him abroad.³⁵

Villa-Lobos' prime goal was to be accepted and recognized by French society as innovative and unique. He arrived in Paris in July 1923, and with the help of friends, scheduled several concerts featuring his and other Brazilian composer's works. One of his pieces he there premiered helped him achieve the attention he wanted: *Nonetto – Impressão rápida de todo o Brasil* (Rapid impression of Brazil) was a piece that received good critiques, and its rhythms, timbres and instrumentation (like the addition of several Brazilian percussion instruments that

³⁴ Once again, there is a disagreement between scholars in regard of who was this "aunt". Gérard Bé-hague and David Appleby agree that the aunt was Leopoldina do Amaral, nicknamed Zizinha; Vasco Mariz and Francisco Pereira da Silva provide only a nickname of the aunt, but a different one: Fifina.

³⁵ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 58-62.

were not familiar to a classical music audience) captivated the audience's attention.³⁶ Because of his success with the Parisian performances, Villa-Lobos was able to convince the French publisher Max Esching to publish some of his works – this was essential to help him spread his compositions through Europe.

When he returned to Brazil, in 1924, he was determined to go back to Paris for a longer stay, and with newer compositions. He convinced himself that “to succeed in Paris, a musician must be ‘exotic’ and a ‘sensation.’”³⁷ In this regard, his personality as a raconteur helped him to acquire the interest of the French Society. He would tell people stories of how he travelled through the deepest and savages areas in Brazil, and had experienced things such as adventures with Cannibal Indians in the forest. Such stories made him become known by the French Society as *Le Sauvage Brésilien* (the Brazilian Savage).³⁸ As one can imagine, those stories attracted the attention of Europeans, at the same time it repulsed most of Brazilians that heard such lies.

He had his second trip to Paris by the end of 1926, returning briefly to Brazil for concerts in 1929, and then returning to stay for a longer time in Brazil in 1930. His next trip to Paris only happened after the World War II, when he was in a different point of his life, works and maturity.

³⁶ Composed in 1923, for flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, celesta, harp, piano, percussion (requires at least three percussionists) and mixed choir.

³⁷ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 73.

³⁸ Villa-Lobos was famous for saying anything he wanted, and telling as many fake stories as he wished. This fact is of such influence that even nowadays scholars have problems trying to catalogue and identify the year of his compositions, because not at all times he would provide their truth date of composition.

3 MODERNISM AND NATIONALISM IN BRAZIL IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY

The transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth-century in Brazil was a period of great cultural, social and political changes. As Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell points out, historical factors such as “the declaration of political independence (1822), the abolition of slavery (1888), and the proclamation of the republic (1889)” prompted artists to pursue artistic renovation that better reflected a changing socio-political landscape.³⁹ Of course, these major historical events are all related to Brazil achieving independence from its European conquerors. This rejection of European influences is integral to understanding the arts of this era, as discussed below.

The cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were the main centers of Brazil’s economic, political and cultural activities. Rio de Janeiro was, during that time, the capital of Brazil⁴⁰ and, consequently, one of the most European-influenced areas of the country; its aristocracy, in its own way, attempted to appropriate many European ways of life, including the arts. The main influence came from France, specifically Paris, which was experiencing the apex of its *belle époque*. The Brazilian arts were largely copies of many French nineteenth-century trends. In music, Romanticism was the dominant and well-accepted aesthetic.⁴¹

Simon Wright summarizes the changes of mentality that happened in the beginning of the twentieth-century in Brazil:

During the first two decades of the [twentieth] century, Brazil’s hitherto dominant cultural and political dependence on European norms rapidly weakened as intellectuals

³⁹ Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, “Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 7.

⁴⁰ Rio de Janeiro was Brazil’s capital from 1763 until 1960, when the capital was moved to Brasília, in the Distrito Federal, where it remains to this day.

⁴¹ Modernism developed in the 20th century as an opposition to, and renovation of, other contemporary movements such as Romanticism, Parnasianism, Realism, Naturalism, and Regionalism.

realized that it was imperative to establish the country's own (albeit multi-racial) identity and to sever age-old ties with, particularly, Portugal and France.⁴²

Elizabeth Travassos indicates that scholars have generally placed Brazilian Modernism between the years of 1922 and 1945, a period that can be divided into two stages (although she does not differentiate them chronologically): One stage is characterized by an emphasis on aesthetic innovations and opposition to the current trends in vogue. In the music field, this was mainly represented by a critique of Romanticism and its excessive sentimentalism. The other period is characterized by a concern for Brazilian national identity, and by the search for ways to create an art that reflected the country and its society. It is in this second stage where the aesthetics of Modernism meet Nationalism.⁴³

Although the event established as the beginning of Modernism in Brazil is the *Semana de Arte Moderna de 1922* (The Week of Modern Art of 1922), in São Paulo, Modernist tendencies had been emerging much earlier. The first event that foreshadowed the new trends and shocked the conservative public was Anita Malfatti's painting exhibition in São Paulo, in December of 1917. Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell reveals the significance of Anita's paintings:

The paintings of Anita Malfatti (1896-1964) represented a striking stylistic break-through and shocked the public not unlike the way Villa-Lobos's music did only a few years later. With daring experiments in light, form, and color (she "discovered color" through the study of works by Gauguin and Monet), her strong artistic presence unwittingly tipped off a protest against academicism [...] Andrade remained supportive of her innovations and believed that she was one of the most significant artistic minds of the time.⁴⁴

⁴² Simon Wright, "Villa-Lobos: Modernism in the Tropics," *The Musical Times* 123/1729 (1987): 132.

⁴³ Mario de Andrade (1893-1945) also divided Modernism into two stages, but they do not correspond to Travassos' division. Andrade's first stage, which he calls the "heroic period," began with Anita Malfatti's exposition in 1917, which sparked the artistic turmoil; the second period began during the Week of Modern Art of 1922, which Andrade called the "destroying period." For more information, see Bruno Kiefer, "Mário de Andrade e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira." *Aspectos do Modernismo Brasileiro*, 7 (1970): 13.

⁴⁴ Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, "Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945," *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 24-25.

After the exposition, Malfatti's paintings were critiqued in a popular newspaper, *O Estado de São Paulo*, by the writer Monteiro Lobato (1882-1948). In the article, "Paranóia ou Mistificação" (Paranoia or Mystification), Lobato pointed to several weaknesses in Malfatti's work, in addition to criticizing the painter's inclination toward the anti-academic and European avant-garde aesthetics. The scathing review caused a commotion between revolutionary artists in Brazil. The writer Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) published an article in the newspaper *Jornal do Commercio* in response to Lobato's critique; he defended Malfatti and criticized the backwardness of the artistic environment in São Paulo. Other important figures of the period also supported Malfatti and her work: Mario de Andrade, the painter Di Cavalcanti (1897-1976) and the writer Guilherme de Almeida (1890-1969.) This conflict, as Elizabeth Travassos points out, that it amplified the range of people aware of the artistic novelties and incited discussions between conservatives and modernists. In other words, it made public a new way of thinking about art. This episode also helped to unite the "modernists," who as a result started working together on an arts celebration for the Centenary of Independence. This collaboration culminated in the Week of Modern Art of 1922.

In the music field, the Nationalist tendencies could be seen from long before the Week of Modern Art, as agreed by many scholars. As noted by Elizabeth Travassos: "The Modernist period did not create musical nationalism, which was already popular in the mid-19th century, and included defenders of the alliance between the collecting of folklore and processing it artistically."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "O período modernista não inventou o nacionalismo musical, que já tinha voga desde meados do século anterior [século XIX], contando inclusive com defensores da aliança entre coleta de folclore e processamento artístico." Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e Música Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Ed., 2000), 36.

According to scholar Vasco Mariz, Brasília Itiberê da Cunha (1846-1913) is considered “the forerunner of the Brazilian music that uses folklore as its inspiration.”⁴⁶ His composition of 1869, *A Sertaneja – Fantasia Característica*, for solo piano, is considered “the initiator of the nationalist musical movement in Brazil.”⁴⁷ It uses the folk tune “Balaio, meu bem, balaio” as one of its themes. Other composers that were pioneers of the nationalistic sentiment were Alexandre Levy (1864-1892), and most importantly, Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1945).⁴⁸ Nepomuceno is responsible for defending the singing of Portuguese, and he composed almost exclusively songs for Portuguese lyrics from 1902 until his death.

Why, then, are these nineteenth-century composers not considered Modernists?

Elizabeth Travassos explains:

What was missing in these composers, according to the Modernists, was an intimacy with the Brazilian music, which would turn the quotation into an outdated device. The national elements would not be visible (and audible) anymore in the melodies and rhythmic cells, but they could disappear, assimilated in the works’ contexts. The operas for which Carlos Gomes achieved fame in Italy were good examples of the problem that the Modernists had previously found: outwardly dressed as Italian melodramas with symphonic instrumentation, underneath they were librettos about a remote Brazil; the characters of the drama sang in the vocal style of the *bel canto*.⁴⁹

One of the main thinkers and influences of Brazilian Modernism was Mario de Andrade, fondly known as the “Papa do Modernismo” (Pope of Modernism.) Although he was not a

⁴⁶ Vasco Mariz, *A Música Clássica Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Andrea Jakobsson Estúdio Editorial, 2002), 42.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The best representative nationalist works from these composers are: Alexandre Levy’s *Suíte Brasileira* (1890) – its Prelude uses the theme of *Vem cá, Bitu*, and its last piece is entitled *Samba*; Alberto Nepomuceno’s *Série Brasileira* quotes the folk tune *Sapo Cururu* in its beginning, and its last movement is entitled *Batuque* (Batuque was a style of music and dance diffused by the African slaves in Brazil; they would dance to the sound of percussion instruments).

⁴⁹ “Faltava a esses autores, do ponto de vista modernista, a intimidade com a música brasileira que tornaria a citação um procedimento superado. Os elementos nacionais não estariam mais visíveis (e audíveis) em melodias e células rítmicas, mas poderiam desaparecer, absorvidos no tecido das obras. As óperas com que Carlos Gomes granjeava aplauso na Itália eram bons exemplos do problema que os modernistas diagnosticavam: com roupagem do melodrama italiano e da instrumentação sinfônica, vestiam-se libretos que falavam de um longínquo Brasil; as personagens do drama cantavam no estilo vocal do *bel canto*.” Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e Música Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Ed., 2000), 38.

music composer, he was an important poet, novelist, essayist, musicologist, journalist, literary and musical critic, and researcher of Brazilian folklore. He became important for the Brazilian Classical music field as a scholar who reworded the music situation in Brazil during his lifetime; he theorized about Brazilian music, and became a critic and advisor for the upcoming composers.

Andrade's ideas about Modernism were prolific throughout his work; one of his most important essays on the topic, *Ensaio sobre a Música Brasileira* (1928) is a true manifesto of nationalistic modernism.⁵⁰ In this essay, Andrade exposes the main points of the nationalistic aesthetic:

- 1) Music expresses the soul of the ones who create it;
- 2) The imitation of the European models confines the Brazilian composers who are studying in schools, forcing an inauthentic expression;
- 3) Their liberation will result in an enlightenment through reconnecting with truly Brazilian music;
- 4) This national music is being formed in the popular environment, and that is where one should look for it;
- 5) Artistically elevated by the works of the great composers, this music will be ready to take its place among others in the international panorama, taking its rightful place with the spiritual heritage of human kind.⁵¹

Through an analysis of these points, one can better understand what Modernism in Brazil was about. First of all, it represented a rupture with the tendencies in vogue in Brazil during the early twentieth-century. As mentioned before, European influences were seen by the Brazilian Modernists as a limitation to the creation of music; these European aesthetics did not speak to the

⁵⁰ Mario de Andrade himself defined his essay as “a study about the technical nationalization of Brazil, accompanied by folkloric documentation.” The text is divided in two parts: the first, where he identifies elements in the Brazilian folklore (rhythm, melody, polyphony, instrumentation and form) that could be deployed in the creation of a truly Brazilian aesthetic; and the second part, featuring 126 transcriptions of traditional Brazilian melodies. Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, “Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 14.

⁵¹ “1) A música expressa a alma dos povos que a criam; 2) a imitação dos modelos europeus tolhe os compositores brasileiros formados nas escolas, forçados a uma expressão inautêntica; 3) sua emancipação será uma desalienação mediante a retomada do contato com a música verdadeiramente brasileira; 4) esta música nacional está em formação, no ambiente popular, e aí deve ser buscada; 5) elevada artisticamente pelo trabalho dos compositores cultos, estará pronta a figurar ao lado de outras no panorama internacional, levando sua contribuição singular ao patrimônio espiritual da humanidade.” Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e Música Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Ed., 2000), 33-34.

changes that Brazil was experiencing, nor its popular cultural environment. Mario de Andrade illustrates this fact: “Modernism, in Brazil, was a rupture, an abandonment of principles and techniques in vogue, a revolt against the national intelligence.”⁵²

Although the proposal was to break with traditions, “Andrade recognized astutely that European compositional techniques, such as structure, form, and orchestration, were an integral part of Brazilian art music and saw the need to adapt those lessons to national values.”⁵³ He defends that “the reaction against what is foreign should be made shrewdly through adaptation of it, not through repulsion.”⁵⁴ The key to the new way of art-making would be through national self-assertion. Bruno Kiefer explains that the self-assertion means:

To think about the reality by ourselves; to be aware of our own way of being linked to our historical conditioning and to project, constantly, our own destiny; to have courage to affirm our own ideas against foreign ones, even when they come with a pseudo-universal labeling; to have the courage to express an autonomous artistic expression.⁵⁵

But why was nationalism taken as the “solution,” the “new path” for this burgeoning aesthetic movement? The artists were looking for a new way to represent the society they lived in and came from; repeating methods exported from other cultures would no longer suffice – they were simply European creations made outside of Europe. Brazil had its unique characteristics – its nature, its music, its people, – elements that had never been thoroughly

⁵² “O modernismo, no Brasil, foi uma ruptura, foi um abandono de princípios e de técnicas conseqüentes, foi uma revolta contra o que era a inteligência nacional.” Conference given by Mario de Andrade in the *Salão de Conferências da Biblioteca do Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil*, in April 30, 1942, published by himself in the book *Aspectos da Literatura Brasileira*. Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 79.

⁵³ Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, “Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 12.

⁵⁴ Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, “Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 13.

⁵⁵ “Pensarmos a realidade por nós mesmos; conscientizarmos o modo próprio de ser com seu condicionamento histórico e projetarmos, constantemente, o próprio destino; têmos coragem para afirmar as idéias próprias contra as de fora, mesmo que venham com o rótulo de uma pseudo-universalidade; têmos coragem para uma expressão artística autóctone.” Bruno Kiefer, “Mário de Andrade e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira,” *Aspectos do Modernismo Brasileiro* 7 (1970): 15.

explored in the arts before. The country's peculiarities had the possibility for creating a new form of art, one with which its people could better identify, and not just simply bow to an Old World aesthetic. As explained previously, key socio-political changes made the need for self-affirmation inevitable; *Brasilidade* (Brazilianism) would be the key to self and national expression in the new century.

Brazilian society was a mixture of European immigrants, indigenous peoples, and African slaves; miscegenation was seen as creating an "authentic" Brazilian people. The country's music was going through a similar process; for the Modernists, music that was truly Brazilian was that which was being created within this cultural miscegenation – neither the African, the indigenous, nor the European music alone would constitute a national, musical identity. In fact, Mario de Andrade believed that, along with Brazilian folklore, popular music was "the most complete, more totally national and stronger creation of our race."⁵⁶ The classical music to be composed should reflect the musical characteristics of the authentic Brazilian race; it would reveal its Brazilian tradition. Mario de Andrade made this one of the aesthetical principals of Modernism, claiming the "necessity to reinforce the Brazilian features and fight against the inner exoticism represented by the non-mixed African, European and indigenous music."⁵⁷ Andrade criticized the "'social distance' that isolated erudite music from the reality of

⁵⁶ Based on these ideals, Mario de Andrade traveled through Brazil to collect the music made in the popular manifestations throughout the country; in 1927 he travelled to the Amazon, in 1942 he went to Minas Gerais, in the Southeast. In 1928-29 he travelled to the Northeast and collected melodies (which he published in his *Ensaio sobre a Música Brasileira*) that included the modinha, lundú, toada, rodas, acalantos, cantos de trabalho, sambas, valsas, mazurkas and cantigas de bebida. For more information, see Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, "Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945," *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 13-14, and Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 81-82.

⁵⁷ "A necessidade de reforçar os traços brasileiros e precaver-se contra o exotismo interno representado pelas músicas africanas, européias e indígenas, sem mistura." Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e Música Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Ed., 2000), 56.

the common audience.”⁵⁸ The use of popular music and national folklore would serve to dissolve the barrier between Brazilian composers and their domestic audience.

According to Mario de Andrade, the use of popular music should not, however, be simply a quotation: “[A] quotation is something accessible to any composer, independent of his nationality.”⁵⁹ The direct use of musical quotations would just be the first step to creating a nationalistic art, according to Mario de Andrade. He claimed that the path to achieving “national unconscious” would be as follows: First, there would be the stage of “national thesis,” where the artists become conscious of Brazilian popular music, no longer neglecting it, but rather studying and analyzing it. Second, the stage of “national sentiment,” where the nationalistic elements are not only disseminated to the popular majority, but are exposed to all levels of society. According to Andrade, the composers would start using folklore and popular music as their source of inspiration; The final stage for Andrade is his so-desired “national unconscious-”, although during his lifetime this stage never came to fruition. This last stage is the more complicated one, because it implies a total incorporation of national elements into the composers’ way of thinking. It is not enough to quote popular music; its elements should become so intrinsic to the compositional process that they will become something with which Brazilian classical music cannot exist without. The music will be considered, then, to be national, not nationalistic – the same way, for example, Beethoven’s compositions are truly Germanic, without being nationalist or featuring Germanic popular tunes.

For my understanding, Mario de Andrade was seeking the creation of a Brazilian aesthetic that, although never completely disconnected from European traditions, would be something completely “new” and unique. As a result, this would thrust Brazil into the

⁵⁸ Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, “Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 13.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e Música Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Ed., 2000), 38-39.

international music scene as a nation as important as, for example, Germany, Italy, or France. This is understandable, as Brazil as a country had never before launched trends in the music field; previously its art had copied foreign models and ways of thinking. The great objective of Andrade and others was to change Brazil from being an imitator to a creator and innovator. One can think of many ways of trying to achieve the uniqueness and autonomy that would characterize the nation. The way Mario de Andrade thought of achieving this was through the folk and popular music; for Brazil and Brazilians, it was an element not widely explored before, and it provided the uniqueness needed for this new, true Brazilian way of creating art.

3.1 Semana de Arte Moderna de 1922

The Week of Modern Art was not, as previously stated, the beginning of Modernism in Brazil; it was just the explosion, dissemination and fixation of the artistic ideals happening during that time. The event occurred in the *Teatro Municipal de São Paulo* over three days, the 13th, 17th, and 19th of February, 1922. It was an event that included music, poetry, prose, lectures, paintings and sculptures, and featured important artists such as Graça Aranha, Ronald de Carvalho, Villa-Lobos, Guiomar Novaes, Oswald de Andrade, Mario de Andrade, Guilherme de Almeida, Anita Malfatti, Di Cavalcanti, Victor Brecheret, and Menotti del Picchia, among others. It is worthy of mention that, whereas the visual arts and literature were represented by several creators, in the music field, the only Brazilian music heard belonged to Villa-Lobos. Some questions, however, arise out of this context: What was the impetus for the Week of Modern Art? Why did it happen in 1922, and why was São Paulo chosen to host it? Furthermore, why was Villa-Lobos the only composer invited to participate in the Week of Modern Art?

The year of 1922 was chosen, in large part, because it was the celebration of the Centenary of Brazil's Independence. This historical moment represented a rupture with the past and, specifically, with European dominance, which are aspects also seen within Modernist aesthetics. Also, since the Exposition of Anita Malfatti's works, Brazilian Modernists increasingly sought to share their ideals with a larger audience, and the Week of Modern Art served as the perfect stage. Perhaps Mario de Andrade gave the best explanation as to why this week would be a seminal moment:

The *paulista* [born in São Paulo] composers remained, however, fragmented in purpose and ideology and needed to gather their forces. *A Semana de Arte Moderna* would handle the initial diffusion of ideas and define new cultural parameters at the same time by staging a forum for targeted and shared deliberation of the conflicts inherent to the production of modern art. [...] the event was an opportunity for artists to divulge the ideas behind their private musings on modernism and renovation and to make public much of what was, until 1922, intimate introspection between friends.⁶⁰

São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were the two main cities and artistic hubs of Brazil in the beginning of the twentieth-century. The city of São Paulo held the expectations for future racial, industrial and economic order. It was chosen as the host city for the Week because it was perceived more open-minded than Rio de Janeiro as a result of its history – São Paulo represented a certain cosmopolitanism versus the more provincial isolation in the capital city: “São Paulo was spiritually much more modern, although this was a necessary result of the Coffee Economy and the consequent industrialism. [...] São Paulo was, at the same time, due to its commercial modernity and industrialization, in a more intimate and technical contact with the modern world.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Sarah Hamilton-Tyrrell, “Mário de Andrade, Mentor: Modernism and Musical Aesthetics in Brazil, 1920-1945,” *The Musical Quarterly* 88/1 (2005): 10.

⁶¹ “São Paulo era espiritualmente muito mais moderna, porém fruto necessário da economia do café e do industrialismo conseqüente. [...] São Paulo estava, ao mesmo tempo, pela sua atualidade comercial e sua industrialização, em contato mais espiritual e mais técnico com a atualidade do mundo.” Mario de

Maria Sekeff highlights in her article that, by design, Villa-Lobos was the composer chosen to represent Brazil in the Week. According to Sekeff, “his literature was in tune with the [Modernist] movement: creative liberties, anti-academicism, tendency toward a nationalist art, interest in the vanguard.”⁶² Villa-Lobos’s compositions before the Week of Modern Art had, with few exceptions, strong influences from Post-Romanticism and Impressionism, and did not feature many nationalistic tendencies. Also, he was known for not affiliating himself with any particular aesthetic movements and always trying to find a “way of his own.” For those reasons, Sekeff’s assertions seem to be a bit of an academic leap. Better arguments are found in Elizabeth Travassos’s book:

The privileged spot that Villa-Lobos had in the programs of the Week as the only Brazilian composer is due to his position in the musical scene. His contemporaries were moving within the realm of late romanticism, and maybe would not have been willing, were they invited, to participate in an enterprise in which the risk of rejection was high. [...]

Glauco Velásquez died prematurely in 1914, Camargo Guarnieri (1907-93) was very young and other musicians from the same generation as Villa-Lobos, like Barroso Neto (1881-1941,) were respected as teachers, but did not have the same influence as composers. Villa-Lobos, by contrast, raised unfavorable reactions from critics, being accused of *debussyanism* and as a prolific producer of nonsensical vulgarities. His position as an independent artist, without ties to scholastic institutions, and the originality of his music, rejected by the guardians of high culture in musical academia, conferred him the modern profile desired by the Week’s organizers.⁶³

The Week was organized by artists and intellectuals from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and was made possible mainly by the efforts of the writer Graça Aranha (1868-1931) and the wealthy coffee merchant Paulo Prado. Both of them, accompanied by the writer Ronald Carvalho (1893-1935), met with Villa-Lobos in October 1921 to invite him to join the *Semana*.

Andrade, as quoted by Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 79.

⁶² “A sua literatura era afim com o movimento: liberdade de criação, anti-academismo, tendência para uma arte nacionalista, interesse pelo vanguardismo.” Maria L. Sekeff, “Villa-Lobos, Músico da Semana de 22,” *Revista Brasileira de Música* 13 (1983): 93.

⁶³ Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e Música Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar Ed., 2000), 27-29.

Villa-Lobos accepted the proposal right away. Bruno Kiefer reports that “Villa [-Lobos] was delighted by the proposal [of the Week,] because it coincided with the ideas for which he had been fighting for years.”⁶⁴ The statement that Villa-Lobos joined the Week because he was seen as a champion of the Modernist cause is something to be carefully reviewed. Villa-Lobos was, in fact, friends with many Modernist artists, having dedicated some of his compositions to them. However, Villa-Lobos did not seek to associate himself with any particularly aesthetics; his goal always was to find his own individual identity, something that uniquely characterizes his music. He did not care to which the musical school Mario de Andrade ascribed, like many other modernist composers did; his music before 1922 rarely used nationalistic elements. In 1915 Villa-Lobos started to reword his music through concerts organized by him and Lucília Villa-Lobos. It is likely that Villa-Lobos recognized in the Week of Modern Art the perfect opportunity for him to make his works known within Brazil (something he was seeking earlier), and that this was the main reason for his acceptance of the invitation.

A favorable argument to that point of view is the fact that Villa-Lobos did not write any new compositions for the Week – he just used the works he had before (see Table 3-1.).

Table 3-1 Musical Performances during the Week of Modern Art

Information from Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 59-61.

February 13th
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graça Aranha’s speech is complemented by music and poetry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eric Satie - D’Edriophthalma, second piece of Embryons Dessechés, for piano - Francis Poulenc [not specified piece,] for piano <p>Ernâni Braga, piano</p>

⁶⁴ “Villa ficou encantado com a proposta, pois coincidia com as idéias pelas quais vinha lutando há anos.” Bruno Kiefer, “Mário de Andrade e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira,” *Aspectos do Modernismo Brasileiro* 7 (1970): 13.

- Music Concert in the first half:
 - Villa-Lobos - **Sonata no. 2** (1916) for cello and piano
Alfredo Gomes, cello; Lucília Villa-Lobos, piano

 - Trio no. 2** (1915) for violin, cello and piano
Paulina d'Ambrósio, violin; Alfredo Gomes, cello; Frutuoso Viana, piano

- Music Concert in the second half:
 - Villa-Lobos – **Valsa Mística** and **Rodante** (1917-19), from the *Simples Coletânea* for piano
A Fiandeira (1921) for piano
Ernâni Braga, piano

 - Danças Características Africanas** (1914-15) [transcription from piano to an octet]
Paulina d'Ambrósio, violin; George Marinuzzi, violin; Orlando Frederico, viola; Alfredo Gomes, cello; Alfredo Corazza, bass; Pedro Vieira, flute; Antão Soares, clarinet; Frutuoso Viana, piano

February 15th

- Music Concert in the first half:
 - E. R. Blanchet – **Au Jardin du Viex Serail**, from the *Andrinople* suite, for piano
 - Villa-Lobos – **O Ginete do Pierrozinho** (1919-20) from the *Carnaval das Crianças*, for piano
 - Debussy – **La Soirée dans Grenade**, from *Estampes*, for piano
 - Vallon – **L'Arlequin**, for piano
Guiomar Novaes, piano

- Music Concert in the second half:
 - Villa-Lobos – **Festim Pagão** (1919), for voice and piano
Solidão (1920) from *Historietas*, for voice and piano
Cascavel (1917) for voice and piano
Frederico Nascimento Filho, voice; Lucília Villa-Lobos, piano

Quartet no. 3 (1916) for strings

Paulina d'Ambrósio, violin; George Marinuzzi, violin; Orlando Frederico, viola; Alfredo Gomes, cello

February 17th

- Music Concert in the first half:

- Villa-Lobos – **Trio no. 3** (1918), for violin, cello and piano

Paulina d'Ambrósio, violin; Alfredo Gomes, cello; Lucília Villa-Lobos, piano

Lune D'Octobre (1920) from *Historietas*, for voice and piano

Eis a Vida (1921-23) from *Epigramas Irônicos e Sentimentais*, for voice and piano

Jouis sans retard, car vite s'écoule la vie (1920) from *Historietas*, for voice and piano

Maria Emma, voice; Lucília Villa-Lobos, piano

Sonata-Fantasia no. 2 (1914) for violin and piano

Paulina d'Ambrósio, violin; Frutuoso Viana, piano

- Music Concert in the second half:

- Villa-Lobos – **Camponesa Cantadeira** (1916-18), from *Suíte Floral*, for piano

Num Berço Encantado (1917-19) from *Simple Coletânea*, for piano

Dança Infernal (1920) from sketches of the opera *Zoé*, for piano

Ernâni Braga, piano

Quarteto Simbólico - Impressões da Vida Mundana (Quatuor) (1921)

Pedro Vieira, flute; Antão Soares, saxophone; Ernâni Braga, piano

(substituting the harp); women's choirs.

Villa-Lobos' works presented in the Week aesthetically belong to the French styles of Post-Romanticism and Impressionism. His own identity and Brazilian characteristics are rarely, if ever, exposed – the *Danças Características Africanas* (1914-15) are the only ones with more

affinity to the Brazilian culture.⁶⁵ This was, nevertheless, expected, since the musical environment in both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro prioritized European music.

Bruno Kiefer analyzed the music programs from 1900 to 1920 in both cities, and considering only the active composers during that time, deduced that: in Rio de Janeiro, Saint-Säens was, by far, the most played composer in recitals and concerts, followed with some distance by Debussy.⁶⁶ Wagner is the next one the list, only representative of Germany; then finally comes the Italians: Puccini, Leoncavallo and Mascagni. The other relevant composers that appear are all French, which proves the French cultural dominance in vogue: Fauré, Charpentier, Duparc, Dukas, Lalo, Chabrier and Ravel. Taking the operas in consideration, Puccini was the most performed composer in Rio de Janeiro. Then came Wagner, followed by Massenet, and distantly are Richard Strauss, Saint-Säens, Debussy, Mussorgsky, Vicent d'Indy and Henri Rabaud. The works of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Bartok almost did not enter Brazil. In São Paulo, the majority of concerts featured Debussy; the second most-played composer was Ravel. Other important names that appeared in programs, but less frequently were: Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Poulenc, Cesar Franck, Fauré, Chausson and Duparc. In the opera field, the majority belong to Italian composers, such as Verdi, Puccini, Donizetti, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Ponchielli, Rossini, Bellini, Boito and Giordano; followed in the proportion of 5:1 by the French, such as: Bizet, Gounod, Massenet, Meyerbeer and Thomas.

Since it is clear that the French aesthetic was the majority in the cultural musical scenario of the two main cities of Brazil, and Villa-Lobos's works presented in the Week where composed under the influences of that type of music, then why did the *Semana* cause so much

⁶⁵ For more information regarding the French influences in Villa-Lobos pieces presented in the Week of Modern Art, see Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 93-94.

⁶⁶ For more information, see Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 13-17; 86-89.

shock in the audience? Bruno Kiefer speculates that the reaction was related to the different types of audience present in the concerts: the ones not used to classical music, or the ones used to the sovereignty of the Italian opera probably got bored and did not agree with that new way of making music; the ones that defended the European Classical and Romantic periods as the only “good music” were probably shocked by the dissonant sounds. Finally, the audience that was used to hearing Debussy and other “contemporary” composers probably paid close attention to the music that was being played. As one can see, the Week did not present new contradictions in the music field – it rather intensified the existing conflict between the conservatives and modernists audiences.⁶⁷

Even though the audience of the *Semana de Arte Moderna* was divided in opinion, the works from Villa-Lobos were mostly well-received. The overall consequence of the Week was positive for Villa-Lobos, and gave him the opportunity to be invited to perform his works in São Paulo – he acquired there more friends and a bigger audience than the one he had in Rio de Janeiro. Although the Week did not raise the interest for Nationalistic music in Villa-Lobos, it did help to reinforce in him those ideals; almost the entirety of his compositions in the period after the Week of 1922 until 1930 reflected national self-affirmation.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 95.

⁶⁸ Bruno Kiefer, *Villa-Lobos e o Modernismo na Música Brasileira* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1981), 98-102.

4 CHORO: A BRAZILIAN POPULAR STYLE OF THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

The *choro* attracted Villa-Lobos during his youth, and achieved its peak during his lifetime.⁶⁹ The term *choro* was first used to designate a style of playing and its instrumentation, rather than a composition or genre. It comes from the 1870s in Rio de Janeiro, and the main goal of this music was to be informal, played by amateurs, and performed at informal gatherings. Vasco Mariz quote illustrates how and when that music was played:

Groups of young men would form instrumental bands, playing at parties, balls, marriages, celebrations, Carnival, continuing their playing in the streets after the close of the events. As crowds followed them asking for encores, they played, sometimes throughout the entire night, with short interruptions at the nearest bar for a stimulating drink. [...] The musicians walked mile after mile, all night long, singing and playing just for the pleasure of it.⁷⁰

The *choro* would feature, in the beginning of the style, a group often called as *terno* (a trio) with guitar, solo flute and *cavaquinho* (a smaller type of guitar); later on, other woodwind and percussion instruments became a traditional part of the group. The *choro* musicians would often belong to the lower-classes of society and be amateurs who not always could read music. For that reason these musicians – called *chorões* (weepers) – had good aural skills and even better improvising skills, an essential part of the “choro-making” style. The repertoire they would play would be based on the popular dances of the time, featuring polkas, schottisches, tangos, waltzes, *maxixes*, and others. It was mainly a syncopated and rhythmic style of playing the elite’s European dances of the time, although it could be used to play any song – anything could be played in a *choro* style. Adhemar Nóbrega illustrates this idea:

⁶⁹ The following section is mainly based on Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour and Thomas G. C. Garcia’s book: *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

⁷⁰ Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 5.

The shifty waltz, the jumpy polka or the lively quadrilles, even not being choro, could be interpreted in such a Brazilian specific way that was said *choro* and *chorinho* [diminutive].⁷¹

One of the *choro*'s main characteristic is “a rhythmic and melodic counterpoint playing against the main melody” and features the melody, the so called center, the bass line, and the rhythmic line.⁷² The soloist plays famous tunes, and is expected to improvise in the melody, especially in its repetition. It is important to point out though, that the melody should always be recognizable during the improvisations. The center is the name given for what is mainly the *cavaquinho* roll, providing the rhythm and harmony to support the melody. In case there is more than one guitar, the second one can also help playing the role of the center, in a simpler rhythmic pattern.



Figure 4-1 Cavaquinho's accompaniment rhythms

Figure from Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour and Thomas G. C. Garcia, *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 5.

⁷¹ “A valsa sestrosa, a polka saltitante ou a quadrilha movimentada, mesmo sem ser choro, podia ser interpretada com um cunho tão particularmente brasileiro que se dizia choro e chorinho.” Adhemar Nóbrega, *Os Choros de Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos e Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1975), 13.

⁷² Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour Thomas G. C. Garcia. *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 3.



Figure 4-2 Guitar's (as center) accompaniment rhythms

Figure from Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour and Thomas G. C. Garcia, *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

The bass line is played by the guitar, who can also improvise contrapuntal melodies and pedal points. The basic rhythmic structure of the *choro* is a division in sixteenth-notes, with syncopations and accentuations in the off-beats.

When the *choro* started to become a genre, it was a style based mostly on the polka's simple harmonies and structures (often AABB, ABA OR ABACA). The main aspect would still be the rhythmic character and its instrumental virtuosity, and the highlight of the melody line.

Villa-Lobos combined these *choros* characteristics with elements of another popular Brazilian style, the *modinha* (a predecessor of the *choro*). The *modinha* is a "lyrical song style that originated in the salon but became popular among wandering *seresteiros* (serenaders) accompanying themselves on guitar."⁷³ It is a simple sentimental type of song, with voice, that was born during colonial Brazil. It contained subtle syncopations but also an improvisational style. By Villa-Lobos's lifetime the *modinhas* were "renovated" by Catulo de Paixão Cearense, and became mainly a *choro* with added lyrics, and that is the type of *modinhas* Villa-Lobos played, even playing together with Catulo. The title *seresta* is given for a type of *modinha*, and

⁷³ Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour Thomas G. C. Garcia. *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 23.

the best distinction between them is that the *modinha* was played in closed rooms, while the *seresta* was played in outside areas, and the musicians would be considered *seresteiros* if they sang and *chorões* if they played. By the beginning of the twentieth-century, this mix was even broader:

At the turn of the century, choro, seresta, and modinha, all of which used the same instrumental core, were closely related; the same musicians played all three genres, at times interchangeably.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Tamara E. Livingston-Isenhour Thomas G. C. Garcia. *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 27.

5 VILLA-LOBOS' CHOROS

Villa-Lobos composed a group of 16 pieces, entitled *Choros*: numbers one to fourteen, plus the *Choros Bis* and the *Quinteto em forma de Choro* (quintet in *choro* style). Some scholars also add the *Introdução aos Choros* (Introduction to the *Choros*) to that list. Numbers thirteen and fourteen are lost; they were taken from the composer's apartment in Paris during his life time, and never found again. These pieces are very different in their instrumentation, duration, and characteristics; what these pieces have in common other than the name *Choros* is the fact that Villa-Lobos tried, in different levels, to portray in all of them the impressions he had of Brazil, and the hugeness and richness of his country.

Table 5-1 Choros' information's

Choros' information's from Simon Write, *Villa-Lobos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60-61.

Date	Number	Instrumentation	First Performance(s)	Duration in minutes
1920	1	Solo guitar	Not known	3
1924	2	Flute, clarinet	18 Feb. 1925, São Paulo	3
1925	3	Clarinet, bassoon, saxophone, 3 horns, trombone, male voices	30 Nov. 1925, São Paulo	6
1926	4	3 horns, trombone	24 Oct. 1927, Paris	6
1925	5	Solo piano	16 Oct. 1927, Paris	5
1926	6	Orchestra	18 July 1942, Rio de Janeiro	26
1924	7	Flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, violin, cello, tam-tam	17 Sep. 1925, Rio de Janeiro	9
1925	8	Orchestra with two pianos	24 Oct. 1927, Paris	18
1929	9	Orchestra	15 July 1942, Rio de Janeiro	23
1926	10	Orchestra and chorus	11 Nov. 1926, Rio de Janeiro; 5 Dec. 1927, Paris	11

1928	11	Orchestra and solo piano	18 July 1942, Rio de Janeiro	60
1929	12	Orchestra	21 Oct. 1945, Boston	35
1929	13 (lost)	2 orchestras and band		
1928	14 (lost)	Orchestra, band and chorus		
1928	Choros Bis	Violin and cello	14 Mar. 1930, Paris	8
1929	Introdução aos Choros	Orchestra with solo guitar	1942, Rio de Janeiro	12
1929	Quinteto em forma de Choros	Flute, oboe, cor anglais, clarinet, bassoon	14 Mar. 1930, Paris	11

Villa-Lobos was a self-taught musician and composer, who always claimed that the musical orientation he had from his father, was enough for him; which make him look no further for lessons of any kind. He never had composition lessons, and as so, his abilities with formal and traditional ways of composition were not his best – he was often criticized in his longer works for lacking a unifying and more structural form.⁷⁵

His first experience in France showed him a challenge: to be original, exotic, and bring more “Brazilianess” to his works – a characteristic that brought great interest and success to his *Nonetto* (1923, for orchestra and chorus). Villa-Lobos saw, then, a great opportunity to use the *choro* as a “style” of composition: the *choro* was seen in Brazil as a typical Brazilian style of music, and it could not be differently seen by the eyes of the European; it was a style brought from the popular music of Brazil, which would attract the attention of the European audience for new styles; and, as the *choro* was previously a way of playing, not a genre, it could fit any free-style of composition Villa-Lobos desired, what would prevent him from a lack of coherence in form in the pieces.

Scholars also highlight some other reasons for him to use the *choro* as the prime inspiration in such a big set: while in France, Villa-Lobos was feeling homesick, and desiring

⁷⁵ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002).

to divulgate the Brazilian popular music abroad; since his idea of picturing Brazil and its variety was well-accepted by the French audiences (as showed by the success of his *Nonetto*) the *choro* genre seemed to be perfect form for composition. Also, the *choro* is a unique form (not similar to any previous structures in the classical music literature), which would be helpful to create his identity and personal style of composition.

The set of *Choros* does not try to copy the music from the *chorões* (the one that best portrays the typical *choro* in the *chorões* style is the number one, which was composed in 1920, before Villa-Lobos decided to compose his set of *Choros*) – it rather uses their music just as an inspiration and possibility for newer styles and incorporation of several aspects of Brazil and its music, like for instance the sound of the birds, the Indigenous melodies, the African- Brazilian rhythms, and yes, the popular rural and urban music. Simon Write explains what this set of *Choros* is:

This series embodies completely Villa-Lobos's vision of Brazil as a vast, teeming landscape, immense in its inclusivity, variety, and proportion. [...] in the *Choros* a new mould was born, in which the improvisations and instrumental groupings of the *chorões* were merely a basis, a convenient name and embryo for a form which would eventually accommodate not only popular elements, but also stylizations of Indian and black music, and of natural sounds.⁷⁶

Villa-Lobos himself explained at several different points what his set of *Choros* is, which follows all the explanations pointed above. For the relevance of this work, is more important to understand the emotional side of those pieces, and what Villa-Lobos had to say about it. In this subject, the following observations are relevant:

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

⁷⁶ Simon Write, *Villa-Lobos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 61.

night, improvising, and the musician demonstrates his skill and his technique. And it is always *very sentimental* [my emphasis], this is important.⁷⁷

“Choros,” the direct translation is cry, crying. This is precisely because in the tradition of Brazil, as we know, in the history of Brazil, the Portuguese and the Spanish sent right at the beginning of the discovery of Brazil all the condemned ones. They were exiled there. And these people were always sad, in a tropical country also sad and miraculous, and very mysterious. They kept the memory, the sad memory of their country. And there they always sang in a very sad way, crying all the time. This is the side of the civilized people. On the Indian’s side, they are also sad. [...] everything is sad. There is a sad tonality, a sad way of being, etc.. [...] the song, its melodic line is sad, very sad. The serenade singers are also sad. Well, they all have chorões characteristics and here is the title “Choros,” given in Brazil for this whole genre of songs in lamentation.⁷⁸

These quotes help one to understand more about the sentimentalism involved in the *Choros*, and are especially important for the understanding of the *Choros* no.5, as explained below.

5.1 Choros No. 5

This *Choros* is composed for piano solo, and is the only one in the set designated for this instrumentation. The only other solo *choro* is number one, written for guitar.⁷⁹ It was

⁷⁷ Lecture given by Villa-Lobos at the *Club des Trois Centes* in Paris on May 29, 1958. The quote is a translation made by David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 80.

⁷⁸ “‘Choros’, a tradução direta é choro, chorar. Isto porque justamente na tradição do Brasil, como devemos saber, na história do Brasil, os portugueses e os espanhóis enviaram sempre, no começo da descoberta do Brasil todos os condenados. Eles foram exilados lá. E essas pessoas estavam sempre tristes, num país tropical, também muito misterioso. Mantiveram sempre a lembrança, a triste lembrança de seu país. E aí então cantavam sempre de uma maneira muito triste, a chorar todo o tempo. Esse é o lado da gente civilizada.

O lado dos índios; eles também são tristes. [...] tudo é triste. Há uma tonalidade triste, uma maneira triste de ser, etc.. [...] a canção, o lado melódico é triste, muito triste. Os cantores de serenatas também são tristes. Ora, todos eles têm um ar de chorões e eis o título “Choros” dado no Brasil para todo esse gênero de canções em lamento”. Carlos Kater, “Encontro com H. Villa-Lobos,” *Cadernos de Estudo: Análise Musical* 4 (1991), 94.

⁷⁹ This piece is one of the most relevant and famous piano works from Villa-Lobos, as pointed by many scholars: “Chôros no. 5 is probably one of Villa-Lobos’ most expressive piano works” – Lisa Peppercorn, *Villa-Lobos: The Life and Works, 1887-1959* (Helsinki: McFarland & Company, 1995), 106; “Choros No. 5 is, along with Lenda do Caboclo, one of Villa-Lobos’s best known piano pieces.” – João de Souza Lima, *Comentários Sobre a Obra Pianística de Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos, Ministerio de Educação e Cultura, 1969), 64.

composed in Rio de Janeiro in 1925, between Villa-Lobos' first and second trip to Paris. It is dedicated to one of Villa-Lobos' patrons, the wealthy industrialist Arnaldo Guinle (1884-1963), who helped sponsor his first, but mostly his second trip to Paris. Villa-Lobos' comments about this work are: "The most interesting aspects of this *choros* 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 the practice of *seresteiros*."⁸⁰

As said previously, not all of his *Choros* were influenced by the music of the *chorões*, but this particular one is definitely based on this *carioca* [inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro] urban music of the early twentieth-century. The piece is described by scholars as belonging to the *seresta* and *modinha* style, which Villa-Lobos managed in a very successful way, as pointed by Béhague: "The *Choros No. 5* represents the best portrayal of the distinctive serenading aspect of the popular *choro* style."⁸¹

The piece's main elements are the ostinato in the left hand, the rhythmic syncopations, the singing and sentimental melodic line, relatively simple conducting harmonies and simple structure. The first two measures are an introduction that establishes the ostinato that will guide all the A section, and is constituted by a bass line and chords. The bass line can be associated with the guitar, and the chords, in interesting syncopated rhythms, can be associated to the center of the *choro*-style. Villa-Lobos' marking for this ostinato accompaniment is *dolente*, which can be translated as "with sorrow." This definition illustrates the ideas he has about the *choros* been a sad and sentimental type of song.

⁸⁰ Heitor Villa-Lobos interview, as translated and quoted by David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 84.

⁸¹ Gerard Béhague, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Search for Brazil's Musical Soul* (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin Press, 1994), 82.



Figure 5-1 Two first measures of *Choros no. 5*

When the melody line enters, it creates a very characteristic way of singing of the *modinha/seresta* style: the melody rhythm is also syncopated, but this syncopation does not match the syncopations of the left hand ostinato – the melody is carefully written in triplets, instead of dotted rhythms. The range of the melody in the A section does not exceed the extension of a 9th, illustrating its singing-like quality. Also, the melodic line carries an insistence and highlight given to some intervals of descendent 2nd (C-B, m.3-4; G-F#, m.5-6; F#-E, m.9-10-11-12).⁸² As soon as the melody appears, Villa-Lobos' indications for the left hand are *en murmurant et bien rythmé* (whispering and rhythmic), while the melody is marked with *vague et bien détaché* (vague, uncertain and recognizable).⁸³

⁸² This interval of 2nd has been related to the *dolente* and sad style of the piece, suggesting a crying action. Examples of this association are seen in the following quotes: “What draws the attention since the beginning – and contributes to give the melody its “crying” character, inherited by the *serestas e modinhas* – is the intervals of descending 2^{nds} – Appoggiaturas.” – Carlos A. Assis, “Fatores de Coerência nos *Choros n° 5* (‘Alma Brasileira’) de H. Villa-Lobos,” *Per Musi* 20 (2009); “both the accompaniment and the melody with its falling minor second are full of melancholy, *saudade*.” Eero Tarasti, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: The Life and Works, 1887-1959* (Helsinki: McFarland & Company, 1995), 106.

⁸³ What Villa-Lobos was probably trying to say with those words is: the mood of the melody should be vague, but the melody should be played clearly, with a singing-like tone.

Vague et bien détaché

f *p*

en murmurant et bien rythmé

p *dim.*

Lento *rall.*

a tempo

Figure 5-2 Measures 3 to 11 of *Choros no. 5*

The interpretation of this opening section is subject to disagreement between scholars. It is clear that Villa-Lobos' intention, if one consider the notation for the accompaniment and melody of such complex rhythms that do not match, is to try to create the popular Brazilian

rubato improvisation way of singing. The question is, how much of this *rubato* is already written and how much should the interpreter add to the score? Souza Lima points that:

Its [*Choros* no. 5's] writing, extraordinarily elaborated by the Author, can assure in such way the so Brazilian swaying that, if any pianist, even without being native to our land [Brazil], play strictly what is written, will obtain perfectly this effect, giving the impression of taking some freedom to create the swing so peculiar to our Music.⁸⁴

Another scholar, Richard Miller, criticizes the interpretations he heard of this piece:

I have not found a recording that preserves the time line in the accompaniment, however. Pianists seem to ignore the notation under the accompaniment (*murmurando e ritimico*) that calls for a rhythmic interpretation. The majority of interpretations diffuses the African time line with *rubato* interpretations.⁸⁵

On the opposite side, other scholars appeal for an “extra” use of *rubato* tempo, like Appleby:

Each of these melodies and ostinatos is intended to be performed according to a particular tradition of *rubato* improvisation, a *jeitinho brasileiro*, a sensuous delay as the player enjoys the luxury of the time on his hands, the unhurried enjoyment of the senses.⁸⁶

Indeed, Villa-Lobos marks are appealing for a more rhythmic precision. But also, the word *dolente* has several meanings in Portuguese other than sorrow – it is also a rocking, soft rhythm. This puts us in an ambiguous position.

It was a tradition during Villa-Lobos' life time to believe that the interpretation of the works of a composer could only be well achieved when both interpreter and composer were native from the same country. And Villa-Lobos truly believed in that, as said by Adhemar Nóbrega:

⁸⁴ Sua grafia extraordinariamente elaborada pelo autor, consegue fixar de tal maneira aquêlo bamboleio tão brasileiro, que se qualquer pianista, mesmo sem ser de nossa terra, tocar estritamente como está grafado, obterá perfeitamente o efeito, chegando a dar a impressão de estar tomando certas liberdades para conseguir a atmosfera do balanceado peculiar à nossa Música. João de Souza Lima, *Comentários Sobre a Obra Pianística de Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos, Ministerio de Educação e Cultura, 1969), 64.

⁸⁵ Richard Miller, “African Rhythms in Brazilian popular Music,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 48/3 (2011): 27.

⁸⁶ David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 83.

The correct interpretation of a musical work in which the complete intentions of the composer are dependent on an unwritten tradition can be performed only by a musician of identical psychological traits, a musician completely familiar with a particular performance tradition, that is, a performer of the same nationality as the composer.⁸⁷

It is a common agreement that this piece is a portrayal of the *serenade-choro* style and that the interpretation of this type of melody by the *seresteiros* involved a spontaneous style. This style cannot be achieved if the interpreter is not familiar with the *serestas* and its “loose” way of interpretation. For all of these reasons, the interpretation of the beginning of this *Choros* points to a freer approach of the tempo, to create the sad and soft rhythm idealized by Villa-Lobos. The first two measures do not indicate a strict rhythmic approach, and a more “lazy” approach to the tempo will help create the sad and painful atmosphere desired. Villa-Lobos’ mark *Lento* and *rall.* at measure 8 will sound out of context if taken as a sudden change of tempo. In my opinion, the “whispering and rhythmic” indication of Villa-Lobos is to assure that the interpreters don’t take enough liberty to the point of making the melody and the accompaniment sound simultaneous; it is to assure the proportion between melody and accompaniment, but not to establish a metronomic realization of them.

This opening section (m.3-13) is repeated from measures 14 through 23. The difference is that a new line with its own rhythmic and melodic structure, presented at measure 12, is now being incorporated in those measures. This new line can also be seen as an equivalent of the center of the *choro*: it uses simpler rhythms, in sixteenth-note divisions, like the role of the second guitar (see figure 4-2). This can also be seen as a section where a more *in tempo* performance is required, in order to make each of the four lines existent clear – this also reinforces the idea of a freer tempo in the beginning, to provide more contrast between the first presentation of the melody and its repetition.

⁸⁷ Adhemar Nóbrega, *Os Choros de Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos e Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1975), 51; translated by David Appleby, *Heitor Villa-Lobos: A Life (1887-1959)* (Boston: Scarecrow, 2002), 83.

This entire section, from measure 1 to 24 is in E minor, and its main harmony, when analyzed based on the bass, is quite simple – another association with the *choro* style. Carlos Alberto Assis summarized these harmonies, as can be seen in Figure 5-3.



Figure 5-3 Harmony reduction from measures 1 to 23 from Carlos Alberto Assis

Carlos A. Assis, “Fatores de Coerência nos *Choros n° 5* (‘Alma Brasileira’) de H. Villa-Lobos,” *Per Musi* 20 (2009).

The form of this work is a point of discordance between scholars. Carlos Alberto Assis sees it as a ABCA form, almost approaching to a sonata form; Eero Tarasti agrees with a similar perspective of Assis, analyzing it as ABC(B)A; Adhemar Nóbrega classifies it as an ABA form; and Gerard Béhague defines it as AA’BA form. What is common between all approaches is the identification of measures 1-11 being repeated by the end of the piece (measures 65-75), which suggests an A – “something” – A form. Another agreement is that the section from measures 34 to 64 works as a developing contrasting section. What happens in the section between 25 and 33 seems to be the point of disagreement – it was considered part of A, part of B, or even an independent section.

My interpretation of this piece’s form is that it has a first idea, presented on measures 1-12, that is immediately repeated, with addition of a line, from measures 12-23 (m.12 finishes the melodic idea, at the same time that presents the opening left-hand accompaniment, repeated on m.13); measure 24 is used for modulation from E minor to E major. This big section from measures 1-24 constitutes part A. The section between measures 25-33 is a big transition

between part A and the following part B, which begins at measure 34 and goes until measure 64 (measures 60 to 64 are a bridge, to bring back the first section); then, the section from measures 65 until the end is the repetition of the A section.

The image displays a musical score for measures 25 to 33 of Choros no. 5. The score is written for piano and bass, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as *Un peu moins animé* (M. ♩ = 66). The score is divided into four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (measures 25-28) features a melodic line in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. The second system (measures 29-32) continues the melodic and rhythmic patterns. The third system (measures 33) includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *rall.* (rallentando), *p* (piano), *f* (forte), and *rit. p* (ritardando piano). The fourth system (measures 33) includes dynamic markings: *a tempo*, *molto rall.* (molto rallentando), *p* (piano), *f* (forte), and *fff* (fortissimo). The tempo is marked as *Un peu animé* at the end of the system.

Figure 5-4 Measures 25 to 33 of *Choros no. 5*

My understanding of measures 25-33 as a transition section can be mainly supported by four aspects: this section introduces the key signature that will be used in the B section, where Villa-Lobos explores the contrast between black keys and white keys chords. The new key signature is presented in a smooth way, for it being the parallel major (fact that shows its relation to both part A and part B). The tempo indication is also a transition between sections A and B – Villa-Lobos’ marking for this section is *un peu animé* (a little faster), and for the B section is *movement de marche, modérée* (tempo of moderate march). Also, the rhythmic ostinato used in this transition section is at the same point melting the rhythmic pattern in A, as the same time as introducing the accentuation of the rhythmic patten of B. Finally, the B section’s melody highlights the interval of ascending 3rds, and this transition section highlights also the interval of 3rd, but descending; so, the interval presented is associated with the B section, but its motion is connected still to the A section.

The diagram illustrates the rhythmic relationships between three sections of a piece. At the top, the 'A section' is shown with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a specific rhythmic pattern highlighted by a red box. A red arrow points down from this box to the 'Transition section', which features a descending 3rd interval. Another red arrow points up from the 'Transition section' to the 'B section'. The 'B section' is marked with a forte (*sfz*) dynamic and a piano (*p*) dynamic, and its rhythmic pattern is also highlighted by red boxes, showing a clear connection to the transition section's pattern.

Figure 5-5 Exemplification of the rhythmic relations between ostinatos of part A, transition, and part B

The figure consists of three musical staves. The first staff, labeled 'A section', shows a piano piece with a treble and bass clef. A red box highlights a descending interval of a second in the treble clef. The second staff, labeled 'Transition Section', shows a more rhythmic piano piece with a treble and bass clef. A red box highlights a descending interval of a third in the treble clef. The third staff, labeled 'B section', shows a piano piece with a treble and bass clef. A red box highlights an ascending interval of a third in the treble clef. Dynamics include *f*, *p*, *sfz*, and *p*. The instruction 'murmurando e bem rythmado' is present in section A.

Figure 5-6 Exemplification of the intervals of descending 2nd on sections A, descending 3rd on transition section, and ascending 3rd on B section

The middle section is very rhythmic and strong (opposing the sentimental and lyric A part), with syncopations and accent marks (*sfz*) and is constituted of dynamics that are in the range of *forte* – contrasting with the first section, softer in dynamic. While the first part had its melodic idea based mainly on descending 2^{nds}, this part has its melody based in ascending 3^{rds}, as can be seen in Figure 5-6. This section also utilizes the triplet figuration present on section

A – this middle section is mainly a short development of everything that happened so far in the piece.

Figure 5-7 Four last measures of *Choros no. 5*

After this section, the A section returns. The last four measures of the piece are a subtle interruption of the previous discourse, and are a big contrast of dynamic. Villa-Lobos' indication of pedal suggests that all sounds are sustained, creating a big blur of sound, and then, step by step, each layer of sound gets released, leaving the solitary E to sound until it dies – see Figure 5-7. All this aspects suggest a very intimate and sentimental approach to this ending, as illustrated by Carlos Alberto Assis:

The non-restatement of the second theme [here presented as transition section] and the absence of a Coda lead us to an impression of deliberate interruption, especially with the sudden irruption of the big arpeggio at the final measures. The absence – something that is kept in the memory – can be compared, metaphorically, to the *saudade* [the closest translation would be nostalgia], and this fact becomes relevant concerning the *alma brasileira* [Brazilian soul].⁸⁸

⁸⁸ “A não reexposição do Segundo tema e a ausência de uma Coda nos remete a uma impressão de interrupção deliberada, principalmente com a brusca irrupção do grande arpejo dos compassos finais. A Ausência – aquilo que fica somente na memória – pode ser comparada, metaforicamente, à *saudades*, e este fato torna-se muito relevante no que diz respeito à *alma brasileira*.” Carlos A. Assis, “Fatores de Coerência nos *Choros n° 5* (‘Alma Brasileira’) de H. Villa-Lobos,” *Per Musi* 20 (2009).

This quote reaches another intriguing factor of this piece – its subtitle: Brazilian soul. Villa-Lobos never explained his reasons for designating this piece like that – aspect that causes, until nowadays, many scholars to discuss its meaning. Some suggestions can be exemplified below:

It is an essentially Brazilian piece, as expressed by its subtitle “Brazilian Soul.”⁸⁹

To *Chôros No. 5* he even added the subtitle *Alma Brasileira* to emphasise its Brazilian atmosphere.⁹⁰

The sorrowful tone of the minor 2nd (of the appoggiatura to the dominant), the soft triplets, the sensual vagueness and the sentimental suggestions included in the extremes parts of this work (its structure is A-B-A) led the author to call the *Choros N° 5* of Brazilian Soul.⁹¹

The real reason to the subtitle given to this *Choros*, we may never know. But what is known to us is that this is an important piece within the pianistic works of Villa-Lobos (and his works in general), composed using a Brazilian inspiration of the *choros* and its life-style, and that carries a deep emotional trace, reflecting Villa-Lobos idea of the sadness intrinsic to the Brazilian people.

⁸⁹ Vasco Mariz, *Villa-Lobos: Life and Work of the Brazilian Composer* (Washington, D.C.: Brazilian American Cultural Institute, 1970), 36.

⁹⁰ Lisa M. Peppercorn, *The World of Villa-Lobos in Pictures and Documents* (Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1996), 129.

⁹¹ “O tom dolente daquela 2ª menor (da apoggiatura para a dominante), as quiálteras molengas, a vagueza sensual e as sugestões de ordem sentimental contidos nos trechos extremos da obra (sua estrutura é A-B-A) levaram o autor a denominar o *Choros N° 5* de *Alma Brasileira*.” Adhemar Nóbrega, *Os Choros de Villa-Lobos* (Rio de Janeiro: Museu Villa-Lobos e Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1975), 52.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The music written in Brazil before the twentieth-century followed strictly European norms. The Old Continent was the model for many things, among them, the Arts. Brazil's best composers would study in Europe and seek recognition there, in order to be also recognized in their home country; for this reason, they would learn and recreate the models used in Europe. With the turn of the twentieth-century, socio-political changes took place in Brazil. The country became independent from Portugal, had its slavery abolished, and the Republic was established. All those rejections to the European dominance needed to be shown in the Arts field. Modernism came, in Brazil, as a perfect aesthetic to rebut the foreign influences. Led mainly by Mario de Andrade's ideas, Brazilian artists tried to create a form of Art that would represent their own land, free from alien influences. The nationalism, then, became the main path to follow.

Villa-Lobos is, undoubtedly, one of the most famous Brazilian composers of all time; in his country and abroad. He is seen as the composer who changed the path of the Brazilian classical music, leaving a legacy. But there is a problem: he was not the only innovative composer during the twentieth-century, so why is *he* pointed out as the greatest composer and better representative of Modernism in Brazil? Brasília Itiberê da Cunha, Alexandre Levy and Alberto Nepomuceno are some of the composers that foreshadowed the nationalism. It is true that they did not take it so strictly as Villa-Lobos did, but it is also true that other composers from Villa-Lobos' lifetime, such as Francisco Mignone, Guerra Peixe and Camargo Guarnieri, also based their compositional style in nationalistic writing. It is also a fact that Villa-Lobos, although friends with Mario de Andrade, would not seek advice from him, or even bother to belong to any aesthetics, as opposed to what the other Modernist composers would do. Villa-Lobos himself claimed that he did not follow any tendencies or had any influences in his

music, and was always trying to find a “way of his own” to compose. The way he found his identity was through the use of nationalistic elements in his music. For all the reasons listed above, it is possible to believe that he was never trying to sympathize with the Modernist aesthetics. It may, however, seem that he recognized the perfect opportunity in the Modernism and appropriated it.

His works before the Week of Modern Art were, basically, Post-Romantic and Impressionist. During the Week, he was exposed to the ideas that were emerging in the Arts, and he could realize that the nationalism was becoming a tendency. It is a fact, however, that pieces such as *Amazonas* and *Uirapuru*, which have considerable nationalistic tendencies, were composed before the Week of Modern Art (they were both composed in 1917). It is possible that, thanks to the Week, Villa-Lobos recognized that the path he was seeking for himself was modern (innovative), and would probably become a tendency. Therefore, he probably thought he was in the right way. Also, after his first trip to Paris, in 1923, he realized that the exotic and unknown could be a high-seller element in his music – Brazil, with its forests, animals, people and traditional music, had all these elements he needed. The fact that he was a raconteur, and used his stories to gain the attention from the Europeans, reinforces that idea.

Villa-Lobos’ set of *Choros* are a masterpiece. The idea of naming this sixteen-piece set after a Brazilian urban style of music that was being born and growing during his lifetime, and that did not use any specific form, was brilliant. This not only prevented him from being criticized for not composing well in pre-established forms (as the sonata-form, for example), since the *choro* was a genre free of form; but also offered him the perfect national element to his music, without necessarily mean only the music from the *chorões*, since the *choro* was also a

“way” of playing any type of music, offering room for the use of any nationalist element (such as Brazilian instruments in the orchestra, or the representation of his native land, for example).

His *Choros no. 5* is one of his most famous piano pieces, being often performed. Its first section, A, is written in the style of the *seresteiros cariocas*, and exemplifies the way they would write their own *modinhas*. It contains a bass line representing the guitar, a center, representing the harmony, and a melody, representing the soloist instrument - in this case, the voice (the melody line is perfectly singable, for the intervals it uses, and also for its small range). The harmony in this section is also simple, and the rhythm is carefully written to provide the syncopate characteristic of Brazilian music; those elements also illustrate other characteristics of the *modinhas*. The contrasting B section is the most Modernist and “Villalobian” one. It still features Brazilian rhythms, but now uses polyrhythms, polytonalism (especially between white keys and black keys, a typical characteristic of Villa-Lobos), and explosive effects. It can even be seen as a representative of Villa-Lobos achieving “unconscious nationalism.” The piece is full with Villa-Lobos’ personality, and can be easily identified, at first hearing, as a composition written by him.

The reason why this *Choros* is his only piece called Brazilian Soul is unknown. It can be speculated, however, within the characteristics the music present, the reasons for this subtitle. The work portrays the *modinha*, which is a lament, a sad type of song. Villa-Lobos thought that the Brazilian people were a suffering people, and that songs like the *modinha* would provide them an emotional outlet. Villa-Lobos represented the sadness of the people in the A sections; but also “happy moments,” like in the transition, in Major key and with syncopated dance rhythms, which contains a melody that can also remind of children’s folklore music; and exuberant moments, like the development B section, which can be seen as a representation of

Brazil's hugeness and diversity. In a poetic way, these sections "describe" Brazil in its social, cultural and nature features. This is not, however, Villa-Lobos' only composition to do that, but it is, still, the one claimed as Brazilian Soul.

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