

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9

Heitor Villa Lobos

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Villa Lobos was from a wealthy family. His father, being an amateur musician, provided Villa Lobos the opportunity to hear musicals held in his home. He taught himself to play cello, guitar, and clarinet. When his father died suddenly he supported his family by playing in cinema and theatre orchestras. After a short study at the Conservatory, he rejected much of the European traditional music taught there and found folk music and the music of street musicians his inspiration. He was a prolific composer writing chamber, orchestral, and vocal works and is probably the most well-known of Latin American composers.

Between 1930 and 1945 Villa Lobos wrote a series of suites for various combinations of instruments and voices which were inspired by the "atmosphere of Bach." The nine suites are not an imitation of Bach's works, but each is in ABA form, theme, contrasting middle section, and return to the theme. Villa Lobos gave the suites a dual nature by assigning a Baroque title and then a Brazilian title to each movement.

In 1945 Villa Lobos concluded the series with Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9, a work which contains bits of the other series. The work begins with a Prelude which is mysterious and quiet and is followed by a Fugue in unusual 11/8 meter and a primitive theme. Villa Lobos said this theme was derived from the music of Brazilian Indians.

Duo Concertante for Bandoneón, Violin, and Orchestra **Raul Jaurena**

Tonight's guest artist is both soloist and composer. Born and raised in Uruguay, Raul Jaurena learned to play the bandoneón from his father, and by the age of eight he was playing in a professional tango orchestra. His talent and creativeness made him an outstanding soloist in South America, United States and Europe. He has played in festivals all over the world, not only as soloist, but also with groups of Latin American musicians. He has collaborated with many great musicians and has performed at the White

House. In 1995 he received a “Bessie” award for a ballet he composed for the Irene Hutton Dance Company. He has made numerous CD’s and in 2007 he was awarded a Latin American “Grammy” for his CD, “Tango Bar.” When he joined Astor Piazzolla (also a renowned bandoneón player) at the Montreal Jazz Festival, Piazzolla declared him “the best bandoneón player ever.” Due to the fact he is so widely traveled his music reflects the culture of many countries. His imaginative use of jazz idioms as well as tango rhythms, his unending search for new ideas and his stunning technical brilliance makes his music truly unique.

The Bandoneón, which looks like a large square box is a free reed concertina. It was invented around 1830 by C.F. Uhlig of Chemnitz, but received its name from a German instrument dealer, Heinrich Band. The original intention for the instrument was for religious music and popular music of the day. German sailors and itinerant Italian workers took the instrument to Argentina where it quickly became incorporated in the local music, especially the tango. The bandoneón is played by holding the instrument in both hands and pushing or pulling out the instrument while simultaneously pushing the buttons on each side. Unlike the piano accordion, the bandoneón has no keyboard and the notes produced on push or pull are different (bisonic). The right and left hand layouts are also different making this instrument more difficult to learn than the ease the player reflects.

Adiós Nonino

Astor Piazzolla

Astor Piazzolla was a renowned bandoneón player and composer from Argentina. Born of Italian parents, he spent most of his childhood in New York City where his parents immigrated. Homesick for his homeland, Piazzolla’s father spotted a bandoneón in a pawn shop and brought it home. The young boy learned to play it so well that at age 13 he was invited to tour with a tango band. He returned to Argentina in 1937 where strictly traditional tango still reigned. Playing in night clubs with groups, he slowly transformed the traditional tango into a new style termed nuevo tango, incorporating jazz and classical elements, extended harmonies and dissonances, counterpoint, and non-traditional forms of music. At first his

music was not popular with Argentines used to their traditional tango, but the acceptance of his compositions in Europe and America slowly converted the Argentine listeners.

Piazzolla wrote *Adiós Nonino* in 1959 as a tribute to his father who had passed away. In this important work he developed a form he used often. The formal pattern was fast-slow-fast-slow-coda, or ABABC. The fast sections were tango rhythms and harsh melodic figures while the slow sections were generally given to the strings or the bandoneón as lyrical solos.

Variaciones concertantes, Op. 23

Alberto Ginastera

Like Heitor Villa Lobos of Brazil, Alberto Ginastera was the most important composer in Argentina to create nationalistic music representing his country’s culture. He studied piano and composition at the conservatory in Buenos Aires. In 1945 he received a Guggenheim Fellowship to study in the United States and his international recognition dates from these years. He was a prolific composer, but eventually destroyed many of his early compositions. He admitted his model composers were Bela Bartok and Igor Stravinsky. He was not adverse to electronically produced music, but chose rather to rely on South American instruments to convey his love of folk music.

Variaciones concertantes was composed in 1953 and premiered in Buenos Aires that same year. Latin American sounds and neo-expressionistic techniques are to be heard in these twelve short pieces. The cello and harp introduce the thematic material and then it is taken up by various combinations of wind and string instruments.

Program Notes by Annette Albright