



Heitor

VILLA-LOBOS

Cello Concertos Nos. 1 and 2
Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra



Antonio Meneses, Cello
São Paulo Symphony Orchestra • Isaac Karabtchevsky

About This Series

The series The Music of Brazil is part of the project *Brasil em Concerto*, developed by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to promote music by Brazilian composers dating back to the 18th century. Around 100 orchestral works from the 19th and 20th centuries will be recorded by the Minas Gerais Philharmonic Orchestra, the Goiás Philharmonic Orchestra and the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra. Further recordings of chamber and vocal music will gradually be added to this collection.

The works were selected according to their historical importance for Brazilian music and the existence of recordings. Most of the works recorded for the series have never had recordings available outside Brazil; many others will have their world premiere recordings. An important part of the project is the preparation of new or even first editions of the works to be recorded, many of which, despite their relevance, have only been available in the composer's manuscript. This work will be carried out by the Brazilian Academy of Music, by the Instituto Musica Brasilis and by musicologists working together with the orchestras.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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About The Scores

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Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)

Cello Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 • Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra

When Villa-Lobos met Lucília, his future wife and a very fine pianist, he told her his main instrument was the cello, too embarrassed to admit that he played the guitar. This episode reveals the different places occupied by the guitar and cello in his musical life: the former was his private choice, connecting him with the popular music traditions of his native Brazil, while the latter accompanied him throughout his public, professional life, as he played in orchestras, in cafes and cinemas, and on tour around the country.

Considerable periods of time separate the three large-scale works Villa-Lobos composed for cello and orchestra: *Concerto No. 1* was written in 1915, the *Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra* in 1945, and *Concerto No. 2* in 1953.

The circumstances in which he wrote *Cello Concerto No. 1, Op. 50*, are not entirely clear. The work was composed between 1913 and 1915 for the cellist Alfredo Gomes (uncle of fellow cellist Iberê Gomes Grosso). The premiere only took place, however, in 1919, and the young Newton Pádua was the soloist, while the composer himself was on the podium. With the facility for which he became renowned, Villa-Lobos was able to progress from being essentially an amateur composer before 1913 to creating a fully formulated and original orchestral idiom in this, his first major orchestral work. His lack of experience does help explain the overly ambitious orchestration, and the concerto's conception reveals the uncertainty of someone still learning to write and torn between a range of different influences: French music, discernible in the attempt at cyclical form; Russian dramatism, from the more theatrical moments to the lightness of ballet music; and virtuosic writing, covering every register of the cello, perhaps influenced by Popper, whose music Villa-Lobos used to perform. Although it gives the impression of having been written by several different composers, the concerto has many attractions, notably its youthful energy, strong themes and the transitions between the movements, which make for an uninterrupted whole, in some ways reminiscent of a silent movie soundtrack.

By the time he wrote the *Fantasia*, three decades later, Villa-Lobos had gone from anonymity to international fame. His reputation in the US reached its height at the end of the Second World War, and not a year passed between 1945 and his death in 1959 without a North American commission coming his way. From the Seventh onwards, his symphonies were all written in response to US commissions, as were the opera *Yerma*, the *Floresta do Amazonas* suite and several concertos – for piano, harmonica or guitar – as well as his two last concertante works for cello.

The *Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra* was composed in 1944–45, at the suggestion of conductor Walter Burle Marx, and dedicated to Serge Koussevitzky, a virtuoso double bassist in his youth, which perhaps explains the inventive use of the cello's lowest register here. Formally, the *Fantasia* is the most effective of these three works: the very choice of title suggests that the composer was more willing by this point to give free rein to his imagination and to superimpose clearly contrasting themes in a more flowing style. There are many hugely inspired moments, including the broad opening melody of the first movement, suspended in a sombre orchestral *ostinato*; the intense virtuosity of the second movement, interrupted by the primitive sonorities of the central section; and the expressive *sertanejo* melody and syncopated orchestral accompaniment of the third movement.

The *Fantasia* was premiered in Rio de Janeiro in 1946. Villa-Lobos conducted the performance, and the soloist was Iberê Gomes Grosso. The latter was a key figure on the Brazilian music scene – the great-nephew of Carlos Gomes and nephew of Alfredo Gomes, he premiered more than 50 works by such leading composers as Camargo Guarnieri and Santoro.

Villa-Lobos's *Cello Concerto No. 2* was expressly commissioned by Brazilian cellist Aldo Parisot for his debut with the New York Philharmonic (and conductor Walter Hendl) at Carnegie Hall in February 1955. A much-respected figure in the US music world, Parisot taught at Yale for nearly 60 years, and died in 2018 at the age of 100. According to his own account of collaborating with the composer, who always worked best under pressure, Villa-Lobos invited him to his New York hotel room three months before the premiere for final adjustments on the piece. Amid all kinds of distractions, Villa-Lobos wrote from morning till night, while Parisot played in order to inspire him with the cello's sonorities, and to try out particularly difficult passages as the composer annotated them. Within a week, the concerto was finished.

More experienced by this time, but also somewhat more conservative, Villa-Lobos returns intermittently to the trope of man's cosmic solitude in the face of the vastness of the natural world, notably in the opening themes of the first two movements. Exceptionally for one of his concertos, in the second movement he makes use of features highly reminiscent of one of the *Bachianas brasileiras* – this was probably done at Parisot's suggestion.

One constant of the concertos Villa-Lobos wrote in the 1950s is the inclusion of an extended cadenza, almost a movement in itself, which summarises previously heard thematic elements and heralds the work's finale. In this concerto, the cadenza acts as a transition between the third movement and the fourth, which has a strong nationalistic flavour.

Fact and myth tend to go hand in hand with Villa-Lobos, and the two definitely converge in his relationship with the cello: the idea that the instrument was in some way his destiny is reflected not only in the central role it played in his life as a performer, but also in the extent to which its voice informs what we think of today as the 'Villa-Lobos sound', particularly obvious in the works for cello ensemble, such as *Bachianas Nos. 1* and *5*. The instrument defined much of his expansive, complex melodic writing and the way in which he handled the specific colours of each register – from the raucous, gravelly sounds of the lower strings to the melancholy lyricism of the upper register – as heard throughout his orchestral output.

Fabio Zanon

Fabio Zanon is Visiting Professor of Guitar at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the author of *Villa-Lobos* ('Folha Explica' series, Publifolha, 2009). He has been Artistic Director of the Campos do Jordão Winter Festival since 2013.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)

Concerto para Violoncelo nº 1 • Concerto para Violoncelo nº 2 • Fantasia para Violoncelo e Orquestra

Ao conhecer aquela que seria sua primeira esposa, Lucília, uma ótima pianista, um Villa envergonhado por tocar violão confessou a ela que seu principal instrumento era o violoncelo. O episódio demonstra o espaço que cada instrumento teve na sua vida musical: o violão foi o instrumento da intimidade, do vínculo com as tradições populares; o violoncelo foi aquele que o acompanhou por toda sua vida profissional. Com ele, integrou orquestras, tocou em cafés e cinemas, e fez turnês pelo Brasil.

Suas três obras de larga escala para violoncelo e orquestra foram escritas com grandes intervalos entre elas: 30 anos separam o *Concerto nº 1* [1915] da *Fantasia para Violoncelo e Orquestra* [1945], e oito, esta do *Concerto nº 2* [1953].

As circunstâncias da composição do *Concerto nº 1*, Op. 50, não são bem claras. Ele foi escrito entre 1913 e 1915, para o violoncelista Alfredo Gomes (tio de Iberê Gomes Grosso). A estreia, entretanto, aconteceu em 1919, tendo o jovem Newton Pádua como solista, sob regência do autor. A facilidade proverbial de Villa-Lobos o levou, em um espaço de poucos anos, de um quase total amadorismo, antes de 1913, a uma linguagem orquestral plenamente formulada e original nessa que é a sua primeira grande obra orquestral, o que parcialmente explica a orquestração ambiciosa demais. A concepção trai a inquietude de um compositor em formação, que se debate entre influências várias: a música francesa, na tentativa de forma cíclica; o dramatismo russo, aqui um pouco teatral, ali, leve como um balé; e a escrita virtuosística, que usa o violoncelo em todos os seus registros, talvez influenciada por Popper, um compositor que Villa-Lobos tocava. Apesar de causar a impressão de que há vários compositores numa só obra, o *Concerto nº 1* é especialmente atraente por sua energia juvenil, pelos temas fortes e pelas estupendas cadências entre os movimentos, que criam um todo ininterrupto, um pouco à maneira das trilhas sonoras de cinema mudo.

Nos 30 anos que se seguiram a essa composição, Villa-Lobos foi do anonimato à celebridade internacional. Ao fim da Segunda Guerra Mundial, seu prestígio nos EUA atingiu o pináculo; nos 14 anos seguintes, não se passou um ano sequer sem que ele recebesse alguma encomenda para os palcos norte-americanos. Assim surgiram a maioria de suas sinfonias, da número 7 em diante, a ópera *Yerma*, a suíte *Floresta do Amazonas* e vários concertos — para piano, harmônica, violão —, além das duas derradeiras obras concertantes para violoncelo.

A *Fantasia para Violoncelo e Orquestra* foi composta em 1944 e 1945, por sugestão do maestro Walter Burle Marx, e dedicada a Serge Koussevitzky, o que talvez explique o uso inventivo da região grave — Koussevitzky fora um virtuose do contrabaixo em sua juventude. Formalmente, é a obra mais eficiente entre as três: a própria escolha do título *Fantasia* sugere um Villa-Lobos mais disposto a soltar as rédeas de sua imaginação e deixar com que temas bruscamente contrastados se superponham de forma mais fluente. Os momentos de alta inspiração são muitos, a começar pela ampla melodia, suspensa num soturno *ostinato* orquestral, logo no início; o virtuosismo delirante do segundo movimento, que é interrompido pela sonoridade primitiva da seção central; ou a derramada ária sertaneja, sobre o acompanhamento orquestral sincopado do terceiro movimento.

A obra foi estreada no Rio de Janeiro, com Iberê Gomes Grosso como solista, sob a regência do autor, em 1946. Gomes Grosso foi uma figura capital da música brasileira: sobrinho-neto de Carlos Gomes e sobrinho de Alfredo Gomes, estreou mais de cinquenta obras de compositores brasileiros do quilate de Camargo Guarnieri e Santoro.

Já o *Concerto nº 2* foi expressamente encomendado pelo violoncelista brasileiro Aldo Parisot, para sua primeira apresentação como solista da Filarmônica de Nova York, no Carnegie Hall (na ocasião, o regente foi Walter Hendl), em fevereiro de 1955. Parisot manteve por décadas uma carreira de prestígio nos EUA, tendo sido professor em Yale por 60 anos, até falecer em 2018, aos 100 anos de idade. O próprio Parisot narra seu processo de colaboração com Villa-Lobos, que trabalhava melhor sob pressão. Três meses antes da estreia, Villa-Lobos o convidou ao seu quarto de hotel em Nova York para ajustes finais na obra. Das sete da manhã até a noite, Villa-Lobos escrevia, absorto em meio a toda sorte de distrações, enquanto Parisot estudava violoncelo para inspirar o compositor com sua sonoridade. Quando uma passagem era particularmente difícil, Villa pedia que ele a testasse. Dessa forma, a obra ficou pronta em uma semana.

Um Villa-Lobos mais experiente, mas, também, um pouco mais conservador, volta intermitentemente ao tropo da solidão cósmica do ser humano frente à amplitude da natureza, especialmente nos primeiros temas dos dois primeiros movimentos. A adoção da fisionomia musical das *Bachianas Brasileiras*, no segundo movimento, é uma exceção entre os concertos do autor, provavelmente sugerida por Parisot.

Um traço constante nos concertos da década de 1950 é a inclusão de uma longa cadência, quase um movimento independente, que faz um apanhado dos temas da obra e anuncia o final; nesse concerto, essa cadência está incorporada ao terceiro movimento e leva a um final de evidente aspecto nacionalista.

Em Villa-Lobos, fato e narrativa mítica se confundem. Em sua relação com o violoncelo, os dois impulsos convergem: a ideia de que o violoncelo é uma predestinação é comprovada não só pela importância que esse instrumento ocupou em sua vida prática, mas também pelo quanto a voz de violoncelo informa aquilo que hoje ouvimos como “o som” de Villa-Lobos, bem evidente nas obras para conjunto de violoncelos, como as *Bachianas nºs 1 e 5*. O instrumento define muito de seu melodismo amplo e complexo e de sua maneira de lidar com as cores específicas de cada registro — entre a rudeza rouca das cordas graves e o tom lamentoso da região aguda —, que se espriam por toda sua obra orquestral.

Fabio Zanon

Violonista, professor visitante na Royal Academy of Music, em Londres, e autor de *Villa-Lobos* (Série “Folha Explica”, Publifolha, 2009). Desde 2013, é o coordenador artístico-pedagógico do Festival de Inverno de Campos do Jordão.

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Osesp)



Photo: Laura Manfredini

Founded in 1954, the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Osesp) has been run by the Osesp Foundation since 2005. Thierry Fischer has been principal conductor and music director since 2020, succeeding Marin Alsop (2012–19), who is now Honorary Conductor. Her predecessors were Yan Pascal Tortelier, John Neschling, Eleazar de Carvalho, Bruno Roccella and João de Souza Lima. In 2016, the orchestra performed at major European festivals, and in 2019 toured China. In 2018, its recording of the symphonies of Villa-Lobos (Naxos 8.506039), conducted by Isaac Karabtchevsky, won *CONCERTO* magazine's Grand Prize and the Prêmio da Música Brasileira, which it was also awarded for the same series in 2014, 2015 and 2016. In October 2022, the Osesp orchestra and choir made their debut performance at Carnegie Hall, New York, performing two programmes – the first as a guest of the hall's official subscription series, and the second the acclaimed Floresta Villa-Lobos (The Amazon Concert) project. www.osesp.art.br

Isaac Karabtchevsky



Photo: Bruno Veiga

Artistic director and conductor of the Orquestra Petrobras Sinfônica, Isaac Karabtchevsky is also artistic director of the Baccarelli Institute and the Heliópolis Symphony Orchestra. He was awarded the Prêmio da Música Brasileira four times (2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018) for his recordings of the complete symphonies of Villa-Lobos with the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo (Osesp). Karabtchevsky has served as the musical director of the Teatro La Fenice, the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire and the Tonkünstler Orchestra. He has taught at the Musica Riva Festival in Italy since 2000. www.karabtchevsky.com.br

Antonio Meneses



Photo: Satoko Kuroda

Brazilian cellist Antonio Meneses was born into a family of musicians in the city of Recife, in the northeastern region of Pernambuco. His international career took off in 1982, when he won the First Prize and Gold Medal in the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow at the age of 25. He has appeared as soloist with many of the world's finest orchestras and worked with such eminent conductors as Herbert von Karajan, Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Riccardo Chailly, Mariss Jansons and Mstislav Rostropovich. He is frequently invited to perform at major festivals, including those of Salzburg, Lucerne, Vienna, Berlin and Prague. Meneses gives regular chamber recitals, and has worked with the Emerson, Vermeer, Amati and Carmina quartets, as well as having been a member of the Beaux Arts Trio from 1998 to 2008. As well as fulfilling a busy concert schedule, he teaches at the Bern Academy of the Arts and gives masterclasses in the Americas, Japan and Europe (at the Stauffer Academy, Cremona, among others).

The *Cello Concerto No. 1* was Villa-Lobos's first major orchestral work. Filled with youthful energy and displaying an eclectic style, it is the sound of the composer finding his voice. Three decades later and with his reputation at its height, the inspired melodies and flowing style of the *Fantasia* sees Villa-Lobos giving free rein to his vivid imagination. Composed for the Brazilian cellist Aldo Parisot, the no less inventive and lushly scored *Cello Concerto No. 2* from 1953 suggests man's solitude when facing the vastness of nature.



Heitor
VILLA-LOBOS
(1887–1959)



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| Cello Concerto No. 1, Op. 50 (1915) | 21:38 |
| 1 I. Allegro con brio – Tempo de Gavotte: Moderato – | 8:03 |
| 2 II. Tempo de Gavotte: Assai moderato – | 6:56 |
| 3 III. Allegro moderato | 6:39 |
| Cello Concerto No. 2 (1953) | 25:45 |
| 4 I. Allegro non troppo | 10:00 |
| 5 II. Molto andante cantabile | 7:02 |
| 6 III. Scherzo: Vivace – | 5:00 |
| 7 IV. Allegro energico | 3:35 |
| Fantasia for Cello and Orchestra (1945) | 20:49 |
| 8 I. Largo | 8:04 |
| 9 II. Molto vivace | 5:29 |
| 10 III. Allegro espressivo | 7:03 |

Antonio Meneses, Cello
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