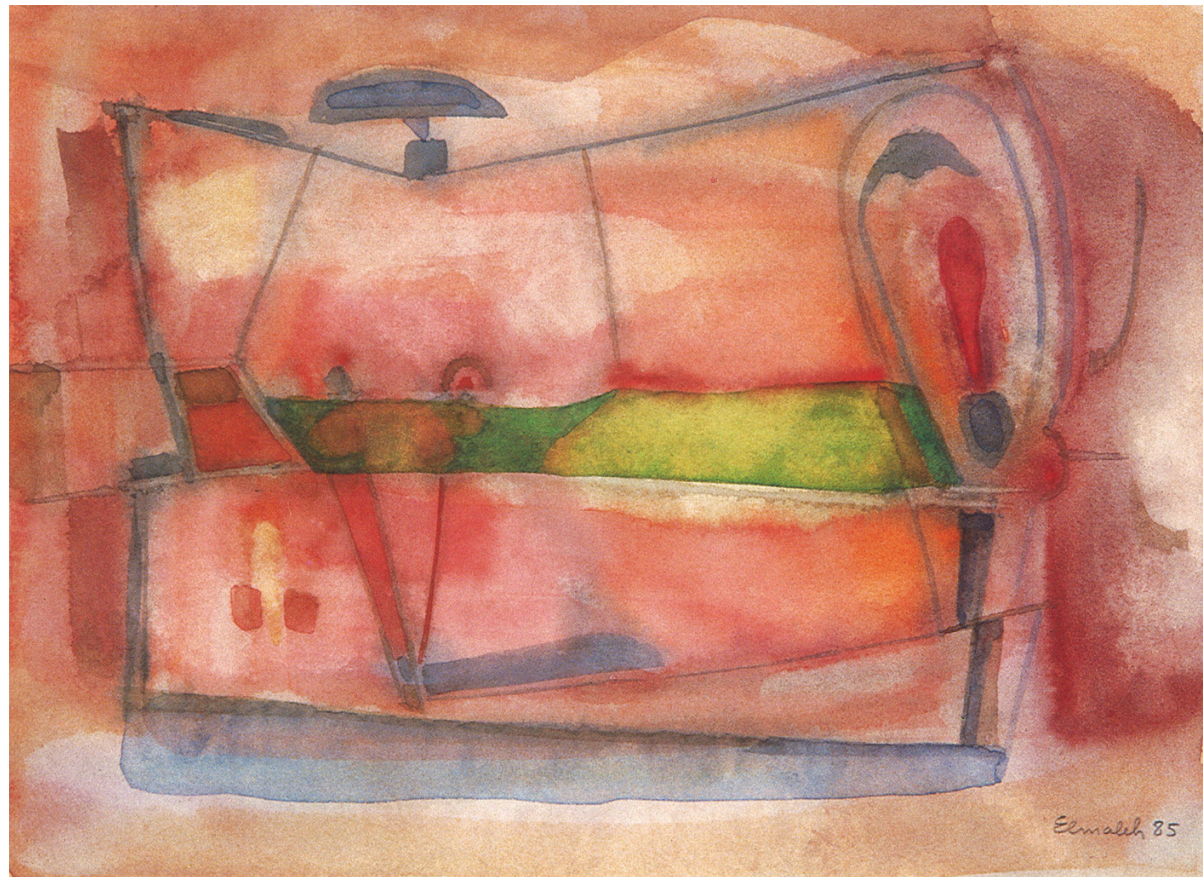




Camargo  
**GUARNIERI**  
(1907–1993)

**Piano Music • 2**  
**Improvisos • Valsas • Momentos**  
**Max Barros, Piano**



Mozart Camargo  
**GUARNIERI**  
(1907–1993)

<b>Improvisos Nos. 1–10</b>		<b>25:52</b>
1	Improviso No. 1: Calmo (1948)	4:11
2	Improviso No. 2 'Homenagem a Villa-Lobos': Lentamente (1960)	3:46
3	Improviso No. 3: Nostálgico (1970)	2:21
4	Improviso No. 4: Saudoso (1970)	2:33
5	Improviso No. 5: Alegre (1981)	1:14
6	Improviso No. 6: Tristonho (1974)	2:43
7	Improviso No. 7: Tranqüilo (1978)	2:16
8	Improviso No. 8: Profundamente triste (1980)	2:53
9	Improviso No. 9: Melancólico (1975)	1:36
10	Improviso No. 10: Dengoso (1981)	1:49
<b>Valsas Nos. 1–10</b>		<b>34:49</b>
11	Valsa No. 1: Lentamente (1934)	3:20
12	Valsa No. 2: Preguiçoso (1935)	3:17
13	Valsa No. 3: Com molesa (1937)	3:54
14	Valsa No. 4: Calmo e saudoso (1943)	3:13
15	Valsa No. 5: Calmo (1948)	2:34
16	Valsa No. 6: Lento (1949)	4:53
17	Valsa No. 7: Saudoso (1954)	3:20
18	Valsa No. 8: Calmo (1954)	3:18
19	Valsa No. 9: Calmo (1957)	2:13
20	Valsa No. 10: Choroso (1959)	4:20
<b>Momentos Nos. 1–10</b>		<b>17:03</b>
21	Momento No. 1: Dolente (1982)	2:02
22	Momento No. 2: Lento e nostálgico (1982)	1:49
23	Momento No. 3: Com alegria (1982)	1:03
24	Momento No. 4: Terno (1982)	1:34
25	Momento No. 5: Desolado (1984)	1:41
26	Momento No. 6: Improvizando (1985)	1:13
27	Momento No. 7 'Homenagem a Henrique Oswald': Calmo e tristonho (1985)	2:08
28	Momento No. 8: Gracioso (1986)	1:03
29	Momento No. 9: Sofrido (1987)	1:55
30	Momento No. 10: Íntimo (1988)	2:12

## Mozart Camargo Guarnieri (1907–1993)

### Piano Music • 2

Mozart Camargo Guarnieri is universally recognised as the most important Brazilian composer next to Heitor Villa-Lobos. His impact on the musical life of Brazil, as a composer, teacher, and conductor can hardly be overestimated. Guarnieri influenced a new generation of nationalist composers for whom the use of folk material was not so much a compositional premise (as it had been earlier in the century) but rather an additional source of material that could be freely combined with elements derived from other musical traditions. This new approach gave their work an aura of universality, coloured by regionalism, and combined with great sensitivity, inspiration and compositional virtuosity. Guarnieri's piano music embodies his most distinctive stylistic features. As a consummate improviser on the piano, Guarnieri had an intuitive understanding of the instrument's technical and expressive resources, and many of his works for the piano reflect this sense of ease and intimacy, sometimes giving the impression that they were composed in a flash of instantaneous inspiration. This is particularly true of most of the works in this volume.

All the musical genres included in this recording belong to the broader category of the 'character piece', a type of composition (mostly for piano solo) that flourished during the Romantic period and became very common in the musical salons of the time. As the name suggests, the character piece conveys a particular mood (or character) and is often monothematic. In his approach to the three genres represented here, Guarnieri remained true to the tradition of the character piece while at the same time imbuing it with a vocabulary that is distinctly personal. In the case of the *Improvisos* and the *Momentos*, this personal element is almost autobiographical, since these works were often tied to specific occasions in Guarnieri's life. Each of the genres is represented by ten works, but only the *Valsas* were planned from the outset to be ten in number; the *Improvisos* and *Momentos* were composed without a predetermined plan to compile them into a collection of ten, but we can imagine Guarnieri stopping at ten works in order to preserve the symmetry of some of his other collections. For instance, the fifty *Ponteios* (*Vol. 1* of this series, 8.572626-27) are grouped into five sets of ten pieces each.

The *Improvisos* are the product of a very special practice in Guarnieri's creative life. Very often, during informal gatherings, he would improvise on short motifs or even a few notes, which were given to him by friends. These moments of improvisation gave rise to instantaneous compositions that would have been lost, were it not for the foresight of these same friends who, surreptitiously, recorded Guarnieri's improvisations. Most of the ten *Improvisos* were preserved in this fashion, allowing the composer to eventually transcribe them and work them out into finished compositions. They were composed between 1948 and 1981, at various places and in different contexts, and were not originally thought out as a set, but were later grouped into a single collection. There are many testimonies about the creation of these pianistic jewels, including a recollection by the composer Osvaldo Lacerda:

'I had the privilege, on many occasions, to see how Guarnieri would sit at the piano and create, without any preparation, unforgettable musical works of pure magic and introspection. These were like genuine confessions of his soul, which entranced and enchanted everyone who was there.'

All but four of the *Improvisos* are monothematic, which befits a genre that is predicated on the free elaboration of a basic idea. The ones that are not monothematic (*Nos. 1, 4, 5* and *6*) follow either an A–B–A form (sometimes augmented with a coda) or a version of one of Guarnieri's favourite forms, an A–B–A–B and its variants. Most of the *Improvisos* are in a slow tempo and of an introspective mood, as if, in the process of creating them, the composer was carrying out a conversation with himself. Each one of them is dedicated to a musician or a friend, and one cannot help but imagine that, to a certain extent, they are also musical portraits of their dedicatees. The *Improviso No. 2* is noteworthy for being the only one that carries a title, '*Homenagem a Villa-Lobos*'. It emulates the great master by quoting the rhythmic pattern of the left hand from Villa-Lobos's *Choros No. 5 'Alma Brasileira'*. When grouping them into a collection, Guarnieri did not follow the order of composition of the individual pieces, but regrouped them in order to create variety and contrast in the sequence.

The European waltz was introduced in Brazil in the late 19th century, and not long after that it became a favoured genre among Brazilian composers. The growing popularity of the Brazilian waltz was the result of a slow process of adaptation, during which the prancing, lively, swooning European waltz was recast as a generally slow, moody, even melancholic genre. This version of the waltz is the one that captivated all the nationalist composers from the late 19th century through to the first half of the 20th century. All of them wrote waltzes, mostly for piano solo, although there are examples of waltzes written for band and intended for outdoor performances. Camargo Guarnieri's *Valsas* are cast in a form and style that display distinctly Guarnierian traits: juxtaposition of melodies and motifs, introspective phrasing, subsidiary melodies that emerge through the emphasis of notes in the background, rhythmic complexity and polyphonic-like textures. Guarnieri's ten *Valsas* are all in the minor mode and all follow an A–B–A form, except for *No. 10*. More importantly, the tempo markings and the character descriptions point to a type of composition that is intimate rather than extrovert. The textures of the *Valsas* are often very complex, which seems to go against the grain of a genre that is, in its original form, fundamentally outgoing. Guarnieri was a master of musical introspection, and it is remarkable that he was able to infuse even a dance-like genre with gleanings of interiority and subjectivity. Guarnieri set out to compose ten *Valsas*, which is to say that, from the very beginning, he thought of these works as forming a cycle. They were composed over a period of 25 years, a circumstance that sits oddly with the idea of organising them into a cycle. However, all of them are unified by a style in which the dance character is completely eschewed in favour of an idealised nostalgia. Furthermore, none of them projects any overt nationalist features, in the sense that they do not rely on any direct reference to Brazilian traditions. Their language is more abstract, psychological, universal. As with the *Improvisos*, each of the *Valsas* is dedicated to a musician or a friend. The *Valsa No. 9* is dedicated to Vera Silvia Guarnieri, the composer's wife.

Stylistically, the *Momentos* resemble the *Improvisos*, but they originated from different circumstances. While the *Improvisos* had an external motivation, prompted by motifs and musical ideas that were suggested to Guarnieri as a catalyst for improvisation, the *Momentos* can be seen as musical 'flashes' of an interior landscape, confessions of the soul. They were composed between 1982 and 1988, therefore covering a much narrower range of Guarnieri's stylistic development. With the exception of the *Momento No. 3*, all of them are rather melancholic, introspective, moody, at times sombre. True to their title, these works are snapshots of a momentary mood or psychological state. These emotional vignettes are imbued with a highly nuanced musical language, with a heavy dose of counterpoint and chromaticism. There is no nodding to virtuosity or purely technical procedures, but instead there is concern for sonority, harmonic shades, and carefully controlled dissonances. Their brevity is another indication of the essentialism of the musical language that Guarnieri brought to them. Even the typical A–B–A form is reduced to its essential elements, with no development of thematic material. In the *Momento No. 7*, dedicated to the composer Henrique Oswald, Guarnieri channels the older master's musical language in much the same way as he emulated Villa-Lobos in the *Improviso No. 2*. The *Momento No. 10*, dedicated to his biographer Marion Verhaalen, was the last work for piano solo that Guarnieri completed. It is a piece of concentrated expression and great psychological intensity, which predominates the use of intervals of thirds in the melody, derived from the tradition of guitar country music from the heartland of São Paulo. In many ways, it is a snapshot of Guarnieri's musical soul, at once intensively expressive and private.

**James Melo**

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## Max Barros



Photo: James Melo

Born in California and raised in Brazil, Max Barros was presented with the Soloist of the Year Award (1985) by the São Paulo Music Critics Association, and is a dedicated champion of Brazilian music. For Naxos he has recorded the complete piano concertos of Camargo Guarnieri with conductor Thomas Conlin and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, which was awarded the Diapason d'or (Discovery Award), and is currently recording Camargo Guarnieri's complete works for solo piano. Barros has toured South America with Virtuosi di Praga and has been a guest artist with the American, Enso, Biava and Escher string quartets, Quartetto di Venezia and St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble. In 2008 he made his debut at the Caramoor festival performing Guarnieri's *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's under Michael Barrett. For the past 20 seasons, Barros has been the co-artistic director of the Ensemble for the Romantic Century. He is also the founder and president of Ponteio Publishing, Inc., and the vice-president and artistic director of the Brazilian Music Foundation in New York. Max Barros is a Steinway Artist.

[www.maxbarros.com](http://www.maxbarros.com)

Considered the most important Brazilian composer next to Villa-Lobos, Camargo Guarnieri had an inestimable impact on the musical life of his country, with a body of piano music that represents the composer's most distinctive stylistic features. Guarnieri was a consummate improviser and many of his piano works reflect a sense of ease and intimacy, giving the impression that they were composed in a flash of instantaneous inspiration. This is particularly true of the 'character pieces' in this volume, from the autobiographical *Improvisos* and *Momentos*, to the intimate nostalgia of the *Valsas*. Volume 1 of this edition can be heard on Naxos 8.572626-27.

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**1–10** Improvisos Nos. 1–10      **25:52**

**11–20** Valsas Nos. 1–10      **34:49**

**21–30** Momentos Nos. 1–10      **17:03**

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A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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